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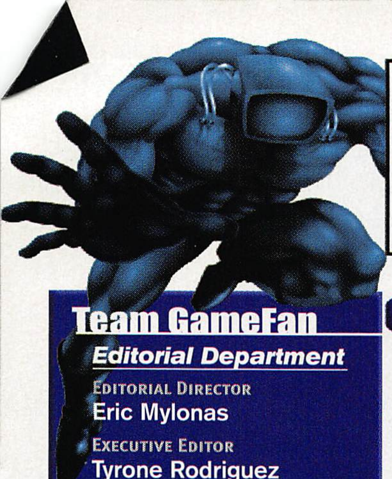


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GAMEFAN

Ed Zone

Well people, the PlayStation 2 launch has come and gone (in Japan). And before you get all excited and expect me to conduct a PS2-bashing session, you can hold your horses. Just because everything isn't all it was cracked up to be doesn't mean I'm going to sit here and tell the world (and especially our competition) I told you so... OK, maybe just a little.

The most important thing that the PS2 launch proved to me is that, if nothing else, Sega and Nintendo are far from out of it in the next generation arms race. Sure, sure, you can tell me all the stories of how the initial PS2 games are only first generation and that as programmers get to know the hardware better "just you wait and see," but I'm living in the near-future, not a year down the line. For all that thought the PS2 would spell the instant end to all competition, well, how's that crow taste? Heck, I'm willing to bet that a large part of the impressive launch numbers had to do with the DVD compatibility and people needing a spare PS (after all, haven't we all owned two or three each?).

While the technology is impressive, it seems that it's impressive in the same way the Saturn hardware was 'impressive': 8000 different processors (OK, that's a bit of an exaggeration); not enough RAM; display problems, etc., etc. Why the PS2 hardware was lauded as revolutionary when the Saturn hardware was derided for being poorly designed is a little beyond me at this point. Sure, the Euro super-coders are all a-flutter over it, but does anybody else remember Scavenger? Ick. Hell, I'm just waiting to hear how the PlayStation 1 chip is being used to handle texture de-compression or geometry set-up in the near-future (ring any bells about the Saturn sound chip?).

And now that we've had some quality time with the system and its new games, I'm going to make a nice little prediction about what we can expect (and picking up somewhat from Ed Zone a few months back) come the US launch this fall. Now, I fully expect the PS2 to be successful—only an idiot wouldn't. However, it's not like Sony is going to roll in and dominate the market like they did with PlayStation. And as a brief segue, I just love watching history repeat time and time again. First Nintendo takes a nasty fall in the transition to 16-bit; then Sega follows suit going into 32-bit; and now I believe that Sony is poised for a bit of a humbling itself. Will people ever learn that a massive ego is **not** a good thing—especially in the consumer electronics business, where one day you're king of the hill and the next... fish food (anybody else remember when Yamaha was top of the heap in the synthesizer market?).

Which is not to say that there won't be some unbelievable games coming down the pike for PS2—quite the contrary. Games like Capcom's *Maximo* and *Onimusha*, Oddworld's *Munch's Oddysee*, Konami's *Gradius III* & IV (OK, OK, that one was just for me) will all re-define how you look and play with games. The creation of Sony Broadband Entertainment should certainly put a nice wrinkle in the network-less PS2 equation and it's a sure thing that the next generation of PS2 titles will be leaps beyond the current ones (much as it is with any console system). And, after all, isn't it really all about the games (at least to you, the faithful reader)...?

However, at this point, I'm firmly of the belief that over the course of the next year and a half, the market's going to strongly resemble the year after the SNES debuted in the US: Sega kickin' butt and Sony slowly but surely creeping up on them (I expect Sony's marketing to be nothing less than brilliant—just no "Theater of the Mind" commercials, please). And of course, we get Nintendo storming into the market in the second half of next year... and then... X-Box.

Oh, and one last minute note on Sega's all-new SegaNet service: brilliant!!! A free Dreamcast for signing up for the ISP service you're gonna want anyway? You can (naturally) catch all the details online at www.gamefan.com—now part of the Express.com family. Till next month, I'm...

Editorial Director
Eric Mylonas

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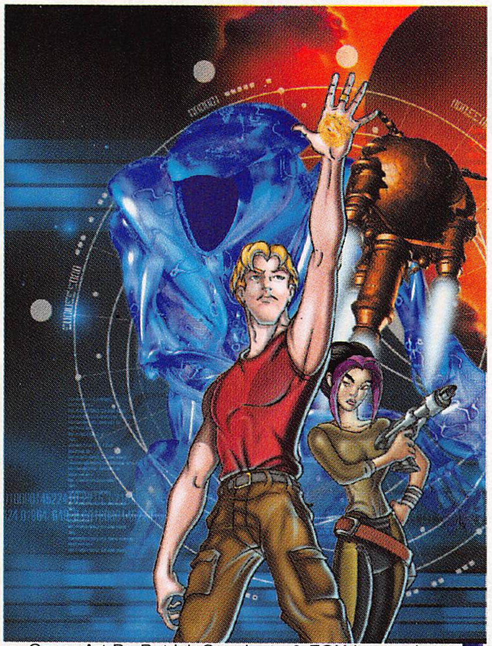


WHIRR, WHIRR,
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It's addictive. It's frenetic. It's a total blast! It's Mr. Driller, the pick-up-and-play puzzle game that's a hole lot of fun. Strap on your hard hat, fire up your drill and tunnel into action. Mr. Driller takes seconds to learn, yet provides years of challenge and enjoyment. Be prepared: once you start drillin' there is no chillin'!
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PlayStation

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COVER STORY



Cover Art By Patrick Spaziente & FOX Interactive



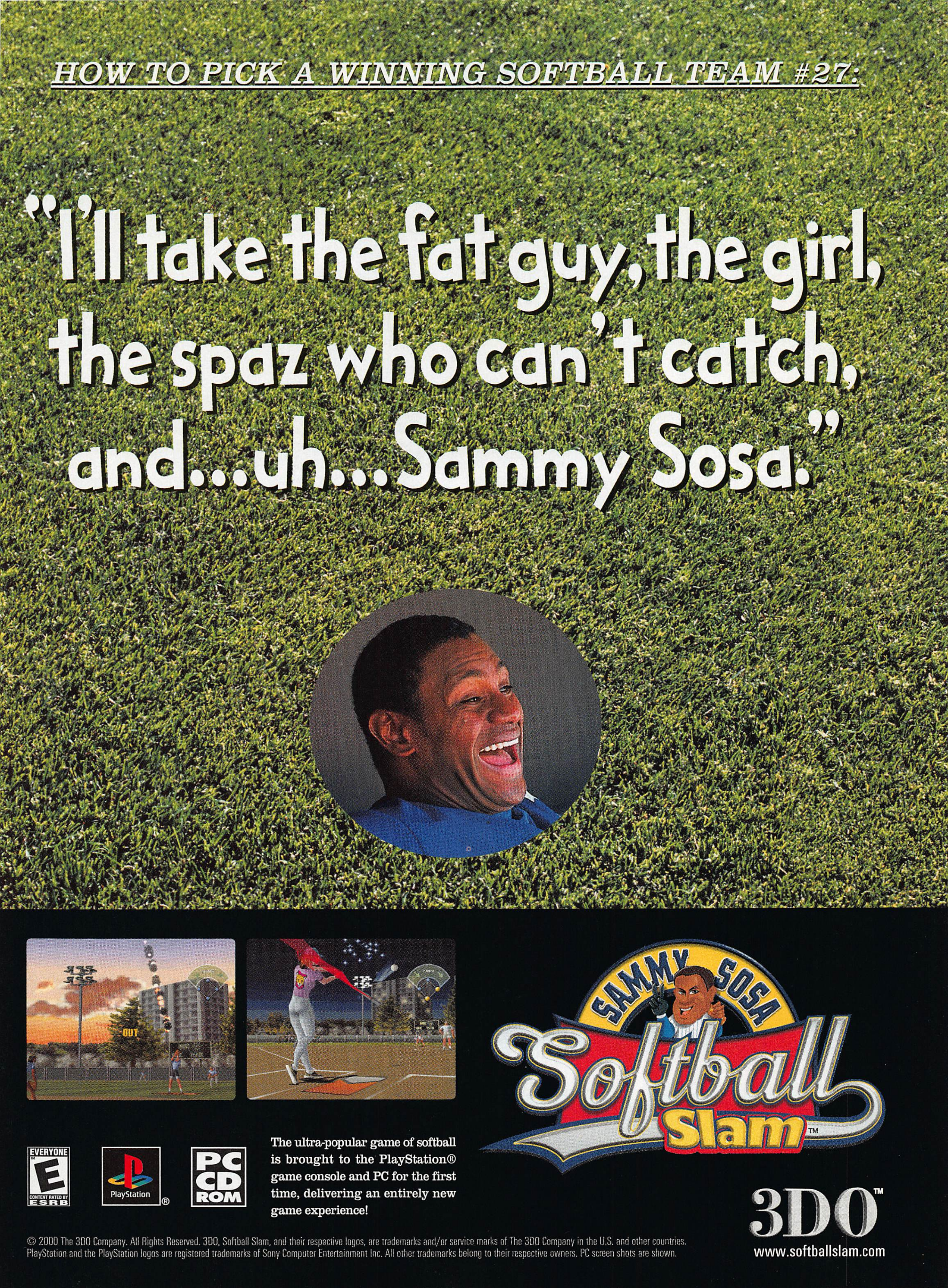








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TOP TEN MOST WANTED

June 2000

Tekken Tag Tournament

Publisher: Namco



Reader's Top Ten

1) *Syphon Filter 2* - PS
2) *Crazy Taxi* - DC
3) *Dead or Alive 2* - DC
4) *Tony Hawk Pro Skater* - PS
5) *Chu Chu Rocket* - DC
6) *Saga Frontier 2* - PS
7) *Soul Reaver* - DC
8) *Soul Calibur* - DC
9) *Sonic Adventure* - DC
10) *NFL2K* - DC

Syphon Filter 2



Reader's Most Wanted

1) *Tekken Tag Tourn.* - PS2
2) *Zelda: Mask Of Mujala* - N64
3) *Powerstone 2* - DC
4) *Guilty Gear X* - DC
5) *Legend of Dragoon* - PS
6) *Virtual On Oratorio Tangram* - DC
7) *Shen Mue* - DC
8) *MediEvil 2* - PS
9) *Perfect Dark* - N64
10) *Blaster Master: Blasting Again* - PS

GAMEFAN EDITORS' TOP TEN

*IMPORT TITLE



1) *Marvel vs. Capcom 2* - DC
2) *Powerstone 2* - DC
3) *Goemon's Gr. Adv.* - N64
4) *Castlevania: LoD* - N64
5) *Virtual On: OT* - DC
6) *Gunbird 2** - DC
7) *Skyblazer* - SNES
8) *Strider 2* - PS
9) *Dungeon Explorer 2* - Turbo Duo
10) *Hybrid Heaven* - N64



1) *RE: Code Veronica** - DC
2) *Ridge Racer V** - PS2
3) *Dead or Alive 2* - DC
4) *Strider 1 & 2** - PS
5) *Perfect Dark* - N64
6) *Crazy Taxi* - DC
7) *Wipeout 3* - PS
8) *Quake II* - PC
9) *Powerstone 2* - DC
10) *Ridge Racer 64* - N64



1) *Marvel vs. Capcom 2* - DC
2) *Unreal Tournament* - PC
3) *Tekken Tag Tourn.** - PS2
4) *Silent Scope 2* - Arcade
5) *Mr. Driller* - PS
6) *Strider 2* - PS
7) *Tony Hawk 2* - PS
8) *RE: Code Veronica* - DC
9) *Soul Reaver* - DC
10) *Crazy Taxi* - DC



1) *Gunbird 2** - DC
2) *Strikers 1945 2** - SS
3) *Deception 3* - PS
4) *Super SF II Turbo* - Arcade
5) *Act Raiser* - SNES
6) *Quake II* - PC
7) *Worms: Armageddon* - DC
8) *Soukyugurentai** - SS
9) *Ristar* - Genesis
10) *Choplifter* - C64



1) *Strider 2* - PS
2) *Ridge Racer V** - PS2
3) *Gunbird 2** - DC
4) *Dead or Alive 2* - DC
5) *Lords of Thunder* - Turbo Duo
6) *Strikers 1945 II** - SS
7) *Crash Team Racing* - PS
8) *Berserk: Gut's Rage* - DC
9) *Virtua Cop 2** - DC
10) *Street Fighter EX3** - PS2



1) *EverQuest* - PC
2) *Strider 2** - PS
3) *Unreal Tournament* - PC
4) *MediEvil 2* - PS
5) *Triple Play 2001* - PS
6) *Worms: Armageddon* - DC
7) *Soldier of Fortune* - PC
8) *Kessen** - PS2
9) *Fantavision** - PS2
10) *Rock the Rink* (just kidding) - PS

GAMEFAN EDITORS' TOP TEN MOST WANTED



- *Phantasy Star Online* - DC
- *Grandia 2* - DC
- *Zelda: Mask of Mujala* - N64
- *El Dorado Gate* - DC
- *Munch's Oddysee* - PS2
- *Powerstone 2* - DC
- *Guilty Gear X* - PS
- *Metal Slug 3* - Arcade
- *Dimahoo* - Arcade
- *Sonic Adventure 2* - DC

(In no particular order)

Developer's Top Ten

This Month's Guest:
David Wisehart
Producer, Titan AE, FOX Interactive

1. *Civilization II* - PC
2. *Alpha Centauri* - PC
3. *Half-Life* - PC
4. *Metal Gear Solid* - PS
5. *Age of Kings II* - PC
6. *StarCraft* - PC
7. *Roller Coaster Tycoon* - PC
8. *Baldur's Gate* - PC
9. *Command & Conquer* - PC
10. *Crazy Taxi* - DC

Civilization II



Publisher: Microprose

One can only hope that Dave has looked to his favorite games of all time from which to draw inspiration for *Titan A.E.*. We couldn't get him to comment on whether or not Genghis Khan will be riding any roller coasters on the Sword Coast, but you can bet there will be aliens... lots of them.


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EDITOR ROUNDUP

Now that Sony's almighty PS2 has arrived and we can at last hold it in our grubby little mitts, did it live up to the hype of "revolutionizing gaming" as we know it? We asked each of our staff members what they thought of the mighty black box that's built to sit on its side, and here's what they said...

ecm@gamefan.com



ECM

ECM is "not impressed" with the PS2, though he has conceded he'll buy one when *Gradius III & IV* comes out (ha, can't turn his back on a beloved shooter). However, ECM, the heralder of good taste, was also the guy who bought a 64DD...

ghiggins@gamefan.com



THE JUDGE

The Judge calls people "psychotic" for spending that much money on an import system, as he is a practical man... who just spent $200 on a Ronco Rotisserie, bought from an infomercial. "Set it, and forget it." The Judge has spoken... (that's s'posed to be cool).

eggo@gamefan.com



EGGO

Eggo is in no hurry to purchase the system, saying that it currently has no killer app—a title of Mario or Sonic caliber—which forces you to run out and buy the system right away. We know what he's waiting for... *Final Fantasy X*? Nope, *Tokimeki Memorial 2K*...

fury@gamefan.com



FURY

Fury enjoys his PS2 and has spent many a night mastering *Ridge Racer V*, but he says "nothing is worth $1000"... although we beg to differ. We're sure if somebody offered a class in "How to Get Some Skill," no matter what the price, he'd be the first to sign up.

cerberus@gamefan.com



CERBERUS

Cerberus enjoys his PS2, as he has played *TTT*, *RRV*, and *SFEX3* to death. It may not be the technological feat Sony was touting it as, with all those early tech demos, but he's happy with the money spent... of course, he also dropped $3,000 on a mechanical dog.



THE 6th MAN

The 6th Man was one of the first owners of a PS2 in our office, and he's logged more hours into *RRV* then any game in recent memory. But was it worth the painful price tag? Not really... and we still haven't seen any sign of his baby brother for the past three weeks...

THE ART DEPARTMENT

reubus@gamefan.com



REUBUS

Reubus thinks the PS2 games so far look great. But he's waiting for *Gran Turismo 2000*. We'll see if he can resist Sony's siren's call when that system seller hits shelves in a few months.

waka@gamefan.com



WAKA

Waka is fascinated with *Kessen* and *Tekken Tag Tournament*, and with those upcoming shots of Hideo Kojima's *Z.O.E.* looking so good, he's got one on order. Trouble in Norrath? Methinks so.

tao@gamefan.com

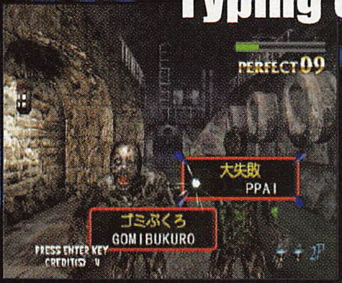


TAO

Tao is in the market for a DVD player, and the U.S. PS2 is perfect for his needs. Sadly, his idea of a killer app is not *Onimusha* or *Z.O.E.* No, Tao waits for one game... *Monster Rancher 3*.

PRODUCTIVITY KILLER OF THE MONTH

Typing of the Dead!



Height: n/a
Weight: n/a
Blood Type: A-
Special Abilities: "Yen" Key of Doom

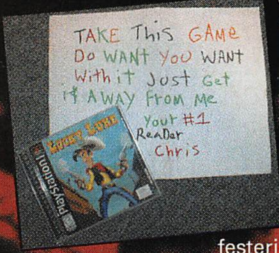
How quickly we mock what we do not understand. Ever since coming back from Japan, Eggo kept talking about the DC version of The Typing of the Dead (which was already out in Japanese arcades), yet nobody understood why, except for Dangohead (who played it at ASI last year). Arcade vendors were charging $1 or $2 a play for what's basically just *House of the Dead 2* with a keyboard instead of a gun. You wouldn't think that many people would be interested. But the game was doing well in every arcade Eggo saw it. Then, when the DC version showed up at the office, everybody started playing it. Even the people who don't like *House of the Dead 2* or those who aren't good typists found *TTotD* intriguing (for rookie typists, you can turn down the difficulty). This is one of those games you have to experience firsthand to understand the appeal. The second you blow away your first zombie with some quick keystrokes, you'll be hooked. Unfortunately, we didn't have room for the full review this issue, so we'll be back with that next month.

This month in GameFan's BOX-O-FUN!

The Evil Lucky Luke

We know little about him, other than his first name... Chris, a loyal GameFan reader, who spent many a sleepless night, cowering in fear of this PlayStation game—the *Evil Lucky Luke*. Oh no, this is no ordinary *Lucky Luke*. This is the *Evil Lucky Luke*, deemed so because of the horrifying details of its inception...

What started out as a minor screwup at the CD plant quickly became so much more... First, *Lucky Luke* was pressed, like any other CD. Only this was no ordinary CD, it was a **bad** print. Fortunately, the foreman of the plant was there to spot it. However, instead of scrapping the CD and sending it to the place where **bad** CD's go, he decided to bring it home to his little boy, Johnny. When offered the game, Johnny merely scoffed and said, "WHAT?! You got me this instead of *ECW*?? Some stupid cowboy game?? I'd rather play *South Park Rally*!" Johnny's dad then went and traded in *Lucky Luke* for credit towards *ECW*, and *that* was simply too much for this **bad** CD to take. Left unattended in the bargain bin for months, this **bad** CD was given time to stew in its juices... festering, scheming, and plotting revenge.



When Chris' mom unknowingly adopted this CD and brought it into her home, little did she know that it wasn't just a **bad** CD... it was an **evil** CD! Fortunately, Chris was hard-core enough to realize the danger, so he stuck it in an envelope and mailed it to us, because we know how to deal with evil such as this. The Evil Lucky Luke is currently held in a maximum security jewel case, constantly under surveilance by a group of 12 ninja gamers and an angry dog named Meesha. The world is a safe place... once again.

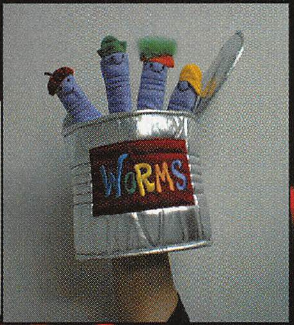
CHICKEN OF THE MONTH

Can O' Worms

It's been a slow time for Chicken these past months, as companies hold back their products and poultry for the upcoming gaming extravaganza known as E3 (a mere month and a half away). Lucky for us, the boredom was relieved by Infogrames sending us this fruity Can O' Worms, timed with the release of *Worms: Armageddon* for the N64.

Not to be mistaken for an oven mitt, this Can O' Worms is actually pretty hip. Just place your hand in the bottom of the can, with your fingers controlling the worms' bodies, then scrunch them all down and close the lid. Then just walk up to a friend and suprise him by suddenly opening the can! He'll never suspect that you actually have a hand in these worms... Check out the worms on the sides. The one on the left is looking pretty chic with the beret, while the one on the right sports the ever-popular sideways baseball cap... very popular with the trendy worms these days. We won't comment on the sailor cap and headband...



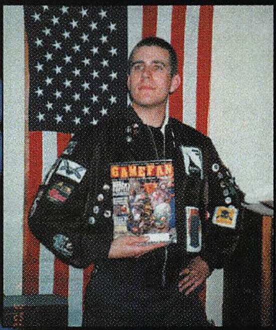


SAUSAGE OF THE MONTH



Congratulations to Deon Smith, our Sausage of the Month. He sent in a seven page, typed plea requesting to be our SotM. In his rant, we found a section of lyrics from a song by Manowar, substituting *GameFan* for some of the words, so the song proclaimed us the Last True Enthusiast Magazine. He also shared with us his philosophy in life (being hard-core in everything he does) and a lengthy list of games he owns, including many an import. All these were strong persuasion for us to select this candidate, but the reason we finally settled on Deon was this picture of him stomping on our competition with his steel-toed boots, nicknamed the Judge and Jury!

What did Leon do to get published in *GameFan*? Simple, he just sent his hard-core story and picture(s) to Posty's mailing address and begged to be put in (we swear the monetary contribution had nothing to do with it). Think you've got what it takes?



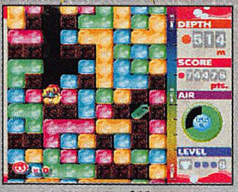




VIEWPOINT



G — Graphics
C — Control
P — Play Mechanics
M — Music
O — Originality



Mr. Driller
PlayStation
Namco
Puzzle
Reviewed page 54

Now here's a cool little game. It has elements of the arcade classic *Dig Dug* and, although the graphics are a bit basic (this game could have been done on a Genesis or SNES and would have looked just as good), it's more than made up for in the gameplay dept. The most frightening thing about *Mr. Driller*, though, is that I'd rather play this than either *Ridge Racer V* or *Tekken Tag on PS2*—am I crazy? The best Namco game since *Soul Calibur*.

G 6 C 8 P 8 M 7 O 9 — **84**

I don't get this game. In arcades in Japan, people were playing it a lot, yet now—just like back then—I still don't see understand the fascination with it. Drill down through blocks, collecting air bubbles... and this is fun? I like puzzle games just as much as the next guy, but *Chu Chu Rocket* on DC will get my puzzle time, not this. If you're must buy a PS puzzle game, try *Devil Dice* or its import sequel, *Xai Jumbo*.

G 5 C 6 P 3 M 6 O 9 — **69**

I'm with Eggo all the way on this one. How in the world can this be considered fun...especially for longer than twenty minutes? Its true that puzzle games aren't exactly my favorite genre, but games like *Bust-A-Move* and *Chu Chu Rocket* are still among my favorite titles to date. Those games have awesome gameplay—*Mr. Driller* has... uh, well, drilling. I think though, what's most painful is the fact that *Mr. Driller* is heading to the DC—no DC *Tekken Tag*!! Thanks, Namco...

G 5 C 8 P 5 M 5 O 8 — **60**



Strider 2
PlayStation
Capcom
Action
Reviewed page 50

Dreamcast what, PS2 who? With all these next gen consoles collecting dust, it's a real testament to how amazing *Strider 2* on the PlayStation is. I have to admit though, after seeing *Strider 2* at last year's E3 I had figured all hope was lost... thank god I was wrong! What an unbelievable turn around. While the game's graphics scream eye candy galore, it's the rock solid control and amazing level design that keeps me playing!

G 9 C 10 P 9 M 8 O 7 — **95**

No complaints here. I wasn't as unfortunate as everyone else—I didn't play *Strider 2* at last year's E3 so my view wasn't tainted. Good thing, too, because from what I hear it wasn't a pretty sight and I would have been much more reluctant to try this bad boy. In the world of sequels this is as good as it gets. *Strider 2* captures almost every possibly facet... and for anything it left out, there's always the bonus disc with *Strider*. *SideArms II*, anyone?

G 8 C 9 P 9 M 9 O 7 — **92**

Strider 2 was by far the least impressive title at last year's E3, showcasing a good idea gone bad. However, the turn around has been nothing short of amazing and the game is now a solid, albeit short, game. My only gripe is the loading screens, which seem to pop up every few minutes, but the inclusion of the original *Strider* game goes a long way to offsetting some of that angst. For straight arcade action, it's a hit.

G 9 C 10 P 10 M 9 O 9 — **94**



Excitebike 64
Nintendo 64
Nintendo
Racing
Reviewed page 64

While I'm sure there's a legion of people out there zipping into nostalgia-land with news of a new *Excitebike* game, I'm not one of them. See, I never much cared for the original NES (and Play Choice) game. Sure, it was always cool to program a track composed of nothing but jumps, but that's as far as my infatuation with that game went. The 64-bit edition is decent and leads the pack of N64 motocross games, but you won't see me kicking mud on this one.

G 8 C 7 P 7 M 7 O 5 — **75**

I just can't believe this is not a Nintendo in house game, it seems to have come outta left field. While I'm not a huge fan of dirtbike games (memories of *D.I.R.T.* still haunt me), this is a title that any racing fan can appreciate. Sure it includes the old *Excitebike* and a nifty 2.5D version but the real fun is in the new game. Control is extremely realistic and the graphics will not disappoint. Remember, you didn't have to be a jet ski fan to like *Wave Race*.

G 8 C 9 P 8 M 7 O 8 — **90**

This game boasts the best visuals in a motocross game yet—a solid engine, rippin' sounds, and a wide variety of tracks and riders. For old schooler gamers, the original *Excitebike* is even in there, as well as an updated version with 3D graphics, the spectator camera angle, and 2D gameplay. I'm not a huge motocross or racing fan, so this one doesn't top my must-have list, but *Excitebike 64* turned out much better than expected...

G 7 C 8 P 7 M 8 O 6 — **81**



Perfect Dark
Nintendo 64
Nintendo
First-Person Shooter
Reviewed page 62

The expectations for this one are huge—so huge that it's doubtful that it'll ever live up to them. Problem is, what was once acceptable in the frame rate dept. is now a huge problem. Though Rare tweaked the snot out of this one, it still routinely hangs in the sub-20 fps zone, making control difficult and makes clean shots an exercise in futility. Overall, it's a good, solid game but it certainly doesn't reach the monstrous heights that its predecessor did.

G 8 C 7 P 87 M 7 O 6 — **87**

My friends and I don't do *GoldenEye* Friday... instead, we have *Quake II* LAN parties. If I want FPS madness, I prefer a mouse and keyboard. However, if I were forced to pick a console FPS, *Perfect Dark* would be it. Solid gameplay, great theme, atmospheric music, novel weapons, and the Rare seal of approval... it's all here. Too bad that after all those delays, the game's still framey sometimes in high res (only on some levels).

G 8 C 9 P 8 M 9 O 7 — **89**

So much for Bond. *Perfect Dark* takes that juicy game engine, sans license, and gives us the unofficial stellar 'sequel'. If you've been salivating waiting for this one, be glad Rare made us wait—because this one smokes. Even in memory-munching hi-res mode, *Perfect Dark* runs at a respectable pace. Control is straight-up *GoldenEye* and the missions become steadily and progressively more difficult. Nearly perfect (sorry couldn't resist that one).

G 8 C 8 P 8 M 7 O 6 — **89**



Dead or Alive 2
PlayStation 2
Tecmo
Fighting
Reviewed page 26

OK, so what we've got here is basically the DC version with some jagged textures strewn about, new costumes and the addition of two new levels—will someone please explain to me why this version doesn't CRUSH its DC counterpart? Was I the only one who expected more? In fact, I'm with Eggo—the DC rev provides the better overall package and man, for a system that's put me so far in the hole, I ain't too pleased. *TTT* wins this round.

G 9 C 9 P 7 M 8 O 8 — **88**

Three fighting games on PS2 so far... and I wouldn't buy any of them. *DoA2* looks great, there's no arguing that, but the ability to reverse 'combos' when you're getting hit destroys any credibility this game had. I'd rather play this than *Tekken Tag Tournament*, but even the DC version of *DoA2* looks better than this (the DC rev looks more solid, has better textures, and is cheaper to buy). Still, I would rather play *Soul Calibur* or *SF3 W Impact* than this.

G 10 C 8 P 6 M 8 O 7 — **86**

Bah, give me *Tekken* or give me *DoA2* and guess which one I'll play. Yes, I know both games are "kinda cheap," but *DOA2* takes it to the limit with its combo breaker-reversals. Adding insult to injury is the slight loss in visual quality when compared to the Dreamcast version. Chalk that one up to home team advantage (i.e. Dreamcast = NAOMI). I'm just a grump, three fighters on PS2 and all of them can be very fun. It's a perfect world if you've got a PlayStation 2.

G 8 C 8 P 7 M 9 O 7 — **83**

'll be the first to admit, 'liberating' the landscape of all enemies and forcing the fleeing masses to run in fear is a great kick, but how many times must I see the same cinemas? For Koei, the graphics are amazing, with solid CGs throughout. The strategy action is second to none, with a wide variety of options, but what you see and what you control are 2 different things, and casual gamers will definitely feel the sting of boredom early.

G 9 C 8 P 6 M 8 O 6 **83**

There is nooo way I would buy *Kessen* for the PS2. Strategy games are frickin' boring... no way around that, folks! But that's not my gripe with the game... not by a long shot. Every damn screenshot I saw of the game right up until the time I played showed these unbelievable, nearly unfathomable graphics—but that's not what you play. We've been duped, what gives? I'm left with so many questions. Can the PS2 do those cinemas in real time, and was the game rushed?

G 8 C 6 P 7 M 8 O 7 **80**

Koei's super-tactical war sim winds up being a psuedo-*Dragon Force* game? Sounds good to me! While I'm not terribly enamored with any of the initial crop of PS2 games, this is probably the best reason to own the console until *Gradius III & IV* roll along. Command mammoth armies of archers, swordsmen and pikemen and bring down your enemies with extreme prejudice. Just keep in mind that if you're importing it helps to have your own Waka available.

G 9 C 7 P 9 M 8 O 8 **91**



Kessen
PlayStation 2 (import)
Strategy
Koei
Reviewed page 32

Ridge Racer 4 left me with a sour taste. I didn't enjoy it too much. With *RR64* and *RRV* I'm back into power slides and racing Devil cars. *RRV* is beautiful in and out. The car models and surrounds environements are stunning. Physics and gameplay have been tweaked a bit, but once you get used to this new incarnation there's no going back. Dust off that old NeGCon and get ready for the race of your life—this one is lightning fast!

G 10 C 9 P 9 M 10 O 7 **92**

RRV and *Kessen* are **the** games to own if you imported a PS2. I spent weeks at a time sliding through that single track in the original *Ridge Racer*. *RRV* is just like *RR*, with better music and graphics, more tracks and cars, and a frame rate the likes of which this series has never seen. Couple that with the sweet powersliding gameplay, and you've got the best racing game yet! Only gripe I have is it doesn't offer anything new...

G 9 C 9 P 9 M 9 O 6 **92**

If this is what we can expect from the 'next big thing' Sega and Nintendo (not to mention MS) have very little to truly worry about on the technology front. It moves fast and the frame rate never dips below a stout 60, but the fact is this isn't a huge leap over what's already out there. In fact, *Rage Racer* on PS is a faster, more playable game. Too bad *RRV* feels like a bad repeat of a game I played at the PlayStation launch over 5 years ago—next...

G 9 C 7 P 7 M 8 O 0 **78**



Ridge Racer V
PlayStation 2 (import)
Namco
Racing
Reviewed page 28

Fury and I run a pretty close race for biggest *EX* fans around the cave. Even as a loyal fan I can't get too excited about *EX3*—there's nothing new to see. It's like a higher res version of a game I've already played. Akuma isn't playable, or even in the game at all. Instead I get Arika's usual bland character design. *EX3* can be fun at times, but not like it could've been. Worth the purchase? I don't think so. Hold out for *MVC2* on PS2.

G 6 C 8 P 8 M 9 O 6 **81**

While I find *DoA2* on the Dreamcast far more impressive, I just can't get over the colors in *EX3*. But, being a launch title, especially on what is being touted as the quintessential next gen platform, I was left dissapointed with Arika's newest work. Fact is, when *Tekken Tag* surfaces, no one will remember *EX3*, including me. Alas, if you dropped MAJOR dough on an import unit (I'm still feeling the effects of my poor decision) it's either *EX3* or *RRV*.

G 7 C 8 P 10 M 10 O 7 **83**

I don't like the old *EX*s on PS, so I figured it would probably follow that I wouldn't like the PS2 revs—and what do ya know, I was right. Listen, if you like *SFEX*, you're probably going to derive some enjoyment from this one. If not, this silly looking (that's right, silly) game isn't going to be your cup of tea—let's just say that most of the character models look like marionettes and leave it at that, OK?

G 6 C 7 P 7 M 8 O 4 **71**



Street Fighter EX 3
PlayStation 2 (import)
Capcom
Fighting
Reviewed page 30

Ok, this game is a serious mixed bag. Sure the character models look super clean but are definitely comparable to the characters found in DC *DoA2*. But the stages (most of them, not all of 'em), now this is what I had in mind! And why didn't they make the backgrounds interactive... weak! While Tekkenheads will be spouting *TTT*'s glories for years to come, I'm still left wondering why the endings aren't CG. I'm going back to *Tekken 3* for some real end beauty!

G 9 C 9 P 7 M 10 O 5 **90**

Ever since I had to grab every frame of combos and 10-hits for all the characters in *Tekken 3*, I've been scarred for life. I vowed never to play *Tekken* again... but ECM leveled a light gun at my head and told me to write this VP, so here goes... *TTT* has all the unlocking, present-unwrapping gameplay that fans should like, but not I. The graphics are wonderful, rivaling *DoA2*, but the play mechanics of *Tekken* are not for me. Give me *VF3tb* or *SF* instead.

G 9 C 6 P 5 M 6 O 6 **70**

We all know how I felt about the arcade rev of this game (I've seen prettier train wrecks) and now that it's all dressed up for PS2, it hasn't improved virtually any in my eyes. It plays the same, and the graphics... well, let's just say *DoA2* on Dreamcast is still king of the hill. If this game is the be-all, end-all of PS2 software, well, there are gonna be a lot of people asking for their money back. Hey Fury, how does that thousand dollar PS2 feel now?

G 8 C 5 P 5 M 9 O 3 **60**



Tekken Tag Tournament
PlayStation 2 (import)
Namco
Fighting
Reviewed page 24

Look at me, playing a vertically scrolling shooter and it's not even 1987 anymore. I love *Gunbird 2*; reminds me of a day when shooters were king and nothing could stop that. I'll warn you ahead of time, there's no special effects, no polygons, not even a rendered intro, but if old-school gaming is what you miss, then *Gunbird* will hit you right where it counts. Like every other shooter in the world, I don't expect this one to make it to our shores. Grab it now.

G 8 C 9 P 10 M 8 O 6 **89**

Before *Gunbird 2*, I played *Strikers 1945 II* on the Saturn religiously. Psikyo one-ups that great vertical scroller with: better graphics, more color, a cooler theme, added gameplay elements (coin combos and close range attacks), no slowdown, and greater difficulty. All other shooters you've played are but child's play—mere training for the Man's game... *Gunbird 2*. Now Capcom, can we get a DC rev of *Strikers 1945: III* please?

G 9 C 8 P 10 M 9 O 8 **94**

I knew that the DC would be a pure arcade machine and thank god for that! Sure, originality is a plus, but so is a port of one of the coolest arcade shooters in recent years. I'm not certain whether it's the graphics or gameplay that makes *GB2* so amazing, but putting it down after a few hours of play is nearly impossible. Psikyo and Capcom, now that's a relationship made in heaven! Impeccable control and Morrigan—Shooters reborn?

G 9 C 10 P 10 M 7 O 7 **96**



Gunbird 2
Dreamcast
Capcom
Shooter
Reviewed page 84

I've said it before and I'll say it again: Capcom loves you! Fifty six playable characters... can you even begin to believe that?! Everything from *CotA* to *Marvel vs SF* is in here and it just looks sooo georgous (can you say Naomi brilliance?). But without a doubt, the most shocking aspect is the backgrounds. For a minute, I almost didn't believe this was a Capcom game. If you're a fan of the *Vs.* series you need this game! Why wait till Fall for this masterpiece, import *MvC2* NOW!

G 10 C 9 P 9 M 4 O 5 **95**

I've always stayed away from Capcom's cursed *Vs.* series, because they don't play like a "real" *Street Fighter* (i.e., a *SF* with "Turbo" in the title). However, I am very impressed with the scope of *MvC2*—there's a zillion characters, lots of multi-fighter lunacy, and scrumptious gobs of hand-drawn animation. The most unfitting music of any game ever... but I am almost tempted to buy it as a showpiece game for when friends come over.

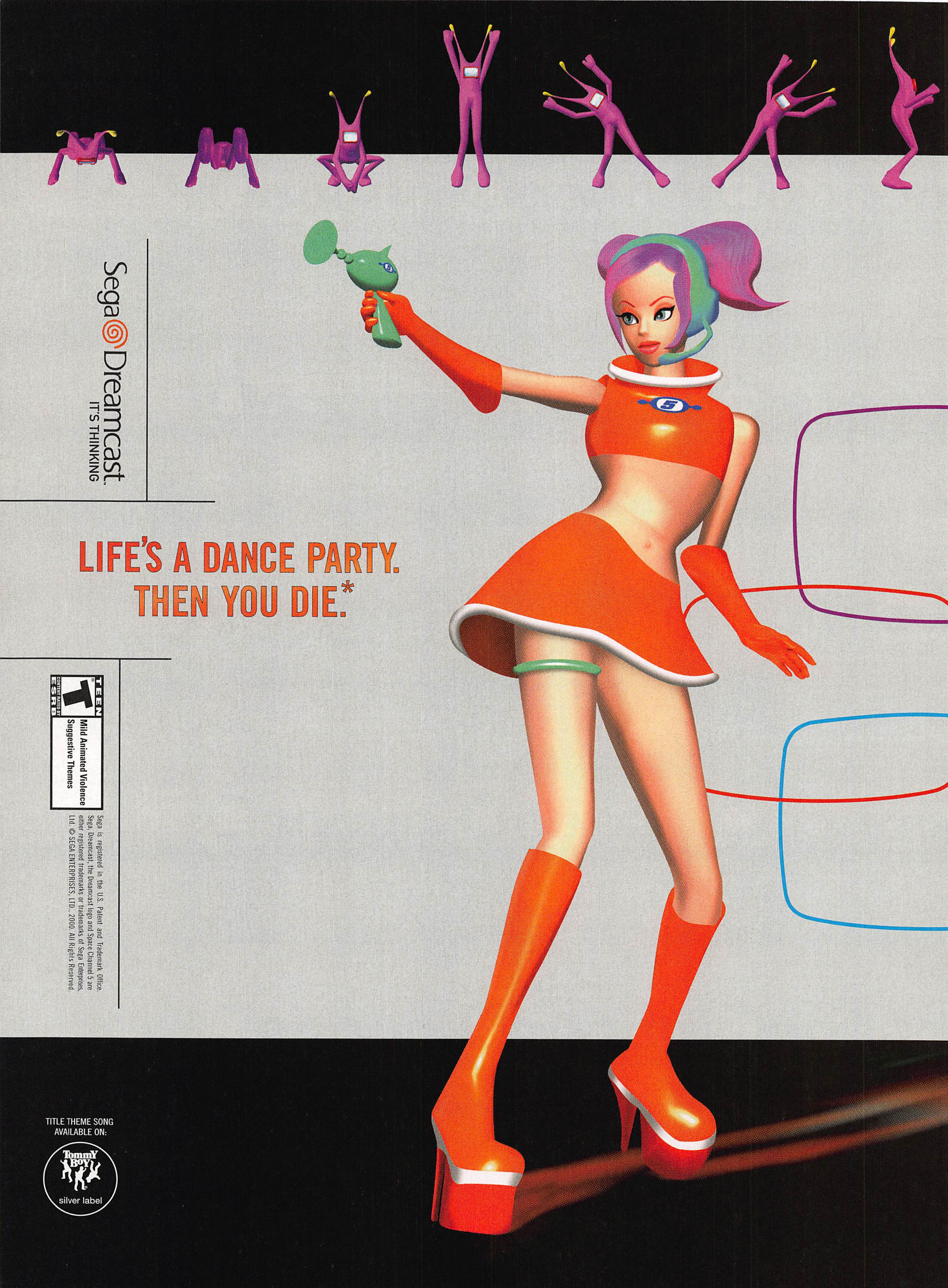
G 9 C 8 P 7 M 10 O 6 **85**

2D/3D MEGA SHOCK! You have **never** witnessed a game like this before! Brilliant graphics; staggering, over-the-top *Vs.*-style gameplay; and the worst music to ever grace a video game conspire to deliver a package that I have a hard time believing will be rivaled (never mind exceeded) any time soon. Could this be the best DC game yet? It's pretty damn close... Chalk up **ANOTHER** AAA DC game—is that sweat I see on your brow, Sony?

G 10 C 9 P 10 M >=(O 7 **97**



Marvel versus Capcom2
Dreamcast
Capcom
Fighting
Reviewed page 86



Sega Dreamcast.
IT'S THINKING
LIFE'S A DANCE PARTY.
THEN YOU DIE.*
TEEN
T
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
Mild Animated Violence
Suggestive Themes
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AVAILABLE ON:
Tommy Boy
silver label


5
Space Channel 5
TM
You dance like a white guy. And now the universe depends on your sorry rhythm. Don't freak space cadet. Cosmic diva Ulala will show you some fly moves. Before long you'll be rump shakin'-it against an alien posse. But don't get too funky or they'll light you up like a Christmas tree. Visit spacechannel5.com
*No Moreliens are actually harmed in this game. Their little souls are returned to the planet Morolia where they are recycled and go on to live happy, productive lives.



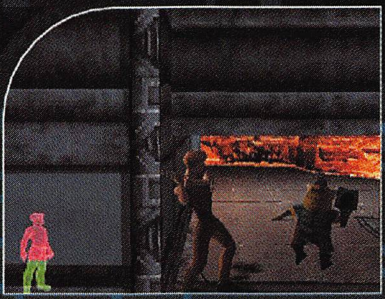
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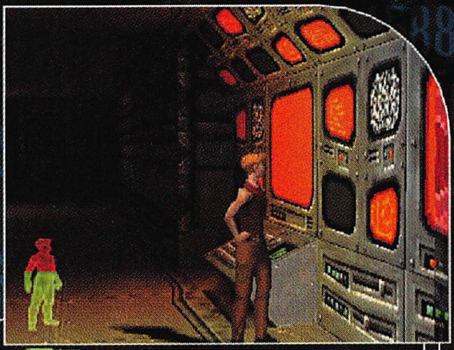
THE 6TH MAN: A GAME OF TITAN-IC PROPORTIONS!	DEVELOPER - INTERACTIVE STUDIOS	1 PLAYER
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Games Based On Movies 101

"O.K., people, we just scored the license to one of the big blockbusters of the year... We've got to have this puppy ready to go at least a year after the movie comes out so that the film's a distant memory in most peoples' minds. Now, first things first: Scratch a great engine off the list—we don't need it with a license like this. And while you're at it, forget hiring that super-hot artist fresh off of last year's big gaming hit, get Lenny the Janitor to do some textures for us. He seems to move that mop with a lot of gusto, let's see how he handles a mouse and the newest version of PhotoShop... I think my son can compose a good score off of that Casio keyboard I bought for him last Christmas, and you, Fredericks, you can do the box art with this set of Crayolas. All right, team, let's go churn this sucker out. You've got six weeks... that should be more than enough time to create something those mindless drones—I mean, our loyal customers—will lap up like starving dogs..."

–Anonymous gaming executive on just about any movie-licensed game pre-*GoldenEye*







Movie Studios: 1, Game Buyers: 0

It's sad, really; so many incredible licenses have been sacrificed on the altar of the Quick Buck. It just was never enough for those licenses' owners to create just a decent, run-of-the-mill title—oh, no, they had to go the extra mile to completely crucify any game they were lucky enough to get their mitts on. I'll spare you the litany of titles that usually accompany these rants, but we all know what games and what companies I'm talking about... Rare's *GoldenEye* changed all of that, though. It was not only a solid game (based on a not-so-solid film... death to Pierce Brosnan!), but it was an incredible game, too—in fact, it was 1997's Game Of The Year in quite a large number of peoples' minds. Rare had managed to raise the bar so high on something that people had completely given up on (seeing a great game materialize from a movie license, that is), though, and every other developer was forced to take serious notice and actually figure out that gamers weren't going to accept any more of their drivel. Which brings us to the latest title to join the ranks of the movie-licensed elite: Fox Interactive's *Titan A.E.*

Since this game was supposed to be based on one of the biggest films of the year (and an animated film that **isn't** by Disney—be still my heart), and it was coming from Fox Interactive, a developer with a solid lineup of quality titles, we knew that there was something special a-brewin' down at Fox's Los Angeles HQ. So we high-tailed it down there in record time, and scored the scoop on what could among the hottest PlayStation (and Dreamcast... maybe) titles of the year.







Opening June 16th at a Theater Near You...

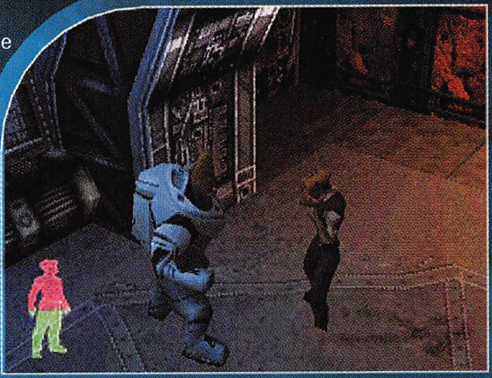
Titan A.E.'s gameplay is a mix between *Tomb Raider*-style exploration (without the switch-flipping idiocy) and hand-to-hand combat. Gamers play as Cale or Akima, running around level after level (which have been crafted after the various and sundry locales of the movie—and some that didn't make the cut), solving puzzles and doing battle with a legion of alien foes straight from the film.

Part of the game's appeal lies in the fact that you can play as either Cale or Akima from the outset of the game. Each faces his/her own set of challenges, and each features slight variations in gameplay and unique individual levels. Unfortunately, there's no switching mid-game, so whomever you pick at the outset, you're with till the bitter end... or death do you part.

An amazingly sweet third-person shooter level separates each level—think *Galaxy Force* (the old Sega arcade game) updated for the year 2000. Players will pilot numerous ships from the film, each with different characteristics and a multitude of death-dealing weaponry. Not surprisingly, I was most keen to get my hands on this portion of the game. It seems Fox is a big fan of multi-engine gameplay... No surprise there, either: Its biggest game was all about multiple engines (anybody else remember the first *Die Hard Trilogy*?).

The most remarkable aspect of the game, though, is its visual quality. All of the environments are expertly modeled, and all the characters are fresh off the celluloid that spawned them. The Drej, in particular (the arch-baddies in the film... the big blue guys), are absolutely incredible—when one's (apparently) destroyed, it shatters into seemingly hundreds of polygonal shards before re-assembling and continuing the rampage. It's one of the most impressive visual effects ever produced on PlayStation, and proof that the skilled programmers at Interactive Studios have got the system dialed. Now, about that Dreamcast port...

As it stands right now, *Titan A.E.* is set to ship along with the video/DVD release this fall—which means that you'll be bombarded by *Titan A.E.*-mania, not just for the next three months, but well into the Christmas season. But, hey, that's all right... after a sneak peek at some footage from the film that hasn't seen the light of day yet, I'm pretty confident in saying that that's a good thing. 6



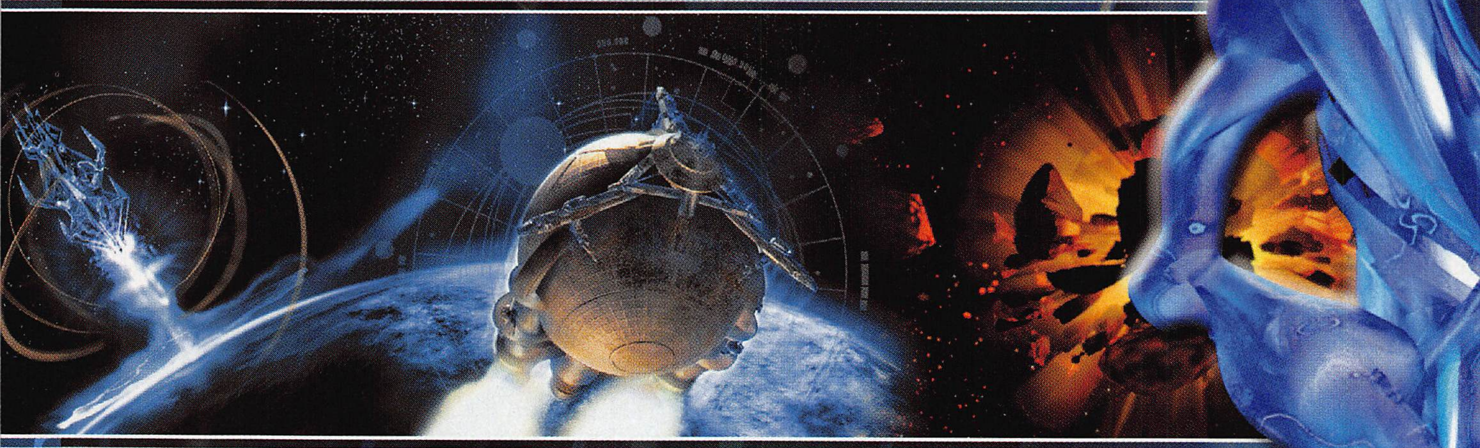


Interview with David Wisehart, Producer at Fox Interactive.

GameFan: Can you briefly fill our readers in on *Titan*'s premise?

David Wisehart: The movie "Titan A.E." is an animated science fiction adventure. The Earth has been destroyed by an alien race called the Drej, and humans are now homeless, scattered throughout the galaxy.

In the game, you play Cale, a teenager who holds the secret to finding the lost spaceship Titan, which has the power to save the human race.



GF: How closely has your team been working with the "Titan A.E." development staff?

DW: We worked very closely with Fox Animation Studios during the development of the film, from early drafts of the script to preliminary storyboards to repeated screenings throughout the production. Animated feature films take many years to complete. I remember seeing some early concept sketches in 1997 that just blew me away. Since then, it's been a gradual evolution from initial idea to finished film, and we've been lucky enough to witness that process.

One of the great advantages to this kind of development process is that we've had access to material that didn't make it into the final film. There are literally hundreds of planets, space stations, spaceships, aliens, vehicles and weapons that were originally designed for the movie, but were left on the cutting room floor, as it were. You wouldn't believe the wealth of material we had to work with—all this amazing stuff that couldn't fit into a 90-minute movie. If anything, it's been an embarrassment of riches.

GF: The movie is not yet a completed product. Has it been difficult crafting a story line for the game?

DW: Not really. The story line was completed pretty early in the development cycle. The dialogue did change a bit, and a few scenes were added or deleted or re-worked along the way. But the dramatic arc of the film was all there in the script.

When you're producing a game based on a live-action feature, you don't usually see a complete cut of the picture until a month or so before release. It's a real handicap, trying to make a game based on a movie you haven't seen yet. But with animated films, you can get a feel for the movie pretty early on. They record the dialog very early, and create a storyboard of the entire film complete with the actors' voices. So you already have a rough beginning-to-end version of the movie. This is the workprint, and it gets updated on a daily or weekly basis. The filmmakers gradually replace the storyboards with more detailed elements. First they add background sketches and pencil animations, shot by shot, scene by scene. Then they add color. Then, final music and sound effects. This process takes a couple of years, but you can literally watch every major step in the evolution of the film. It's really amazing.

Of course, it can also be a curse. We've built a few levels in the game based on scripted or storyboarded scenes that are no longer in the movie. For example, there was a brief action moment toward the end of the film that we wanted to use. When we first saw it, we thought, "Yeah, that'll be a great level!" So we programmed it in. Then, of course, last week, I watched the latest version of the workprint, and they cut that scene! Not the entire scene, mind you, but the specific moment we were referencing in the game. It was absolutely the right thing to do for the movie, for the pace of the narrative, but now, people playing the game will think we made it up ourselves.

GF: "Titan A.E." appears to have a VERY mature theme for an animated film. Was it your goal to stay absolutely true to the film's adult story line?

DW: Well, the film is rated 'PG,' so it's a bit more mature than the typical 'G'-rated Disney movie. There's a lot of action and suspense, and I suppose it'll be pretty intense for young kids. But it's perfect for a video game; it's a real roller coaster of a movie.

Of course, some of the themes of the film are going to resonate with an older audience. Cale is a more realistic teenager than you're used to seeing in animated films. He's sort of an anti-hero at the beginning. His home world is destroyed, his father abandoned him and now he's stuck in a miserable dead-end job and surrounded by hostile aliens who treat all humans like the scum of the universe.

GF: Your title looks to combine the elements of two separate game engines, a 3D beat-'em-up and a forward scrolling, *Panzer Dragoon*-style shooter. Was this multiple-engine theory at all suggested by your company's tremendous success with the *Die Hard Trilogy* games?

DW: Well, you can offer the player a variety of gameplay styles, so long as the game is fun. We certainly had success using this approach with *Die Hard Trilogy*. With *Titan A.E.*, multiple game engines allowed us to bring more elements from the film into the game.

GF: What has been the greatest challenge in creating *Titan A.E.*?

DW: It's always a production challenge when you're chasing a movie... Although the story line has been set for more than a year, there are still some elements of the film that

PlayStation

don't get finalized until the last minute—music, sound effects, and even the look and coloring of some of the scenes.

GF: Has this been an in-house project? If not, what developer are you guys working with?
DW: The game is being developed by Interactive Studios in the U.K.; they did *Action Man*, *War Games* and *Glover*.

GF: What titles have you used as inspiration for *Titan*'s development?
DW: Most of the inspiration for the game comes from the movie itself. We looked at the film and said, "Man, that would make a great game!" But there are so many elements in the film that could make a complete game by themselves...

For the flying levels, we looked at games like *Omega Boost*, *StarFox* and *Colony Wars*. In *Titan A.E.*, you fly a different spaceship on almost every flying level. Each ship has a different feel to it, different features—so we looked at a lot of games.

For the exploration levels, we studied *Metal Gear Solid*, *Half Life*, *Resident Evil 2*, *Final Fantasy VIII* and *Jet Force Gemini*, to name a few. There are even places in the game where you'll have to fight hand-to-hand, so we looked at the fighting systems in some of the better fighting games.

Some levels focus on shooting, or puzzles, or RPG interactions, or stealth, or hand-to-hand combat. In the final level, of course, you need to use every skill you've mastered in order to beat the game.

GF: What totally unique features can we expect from *Titan A.E.*? You had mentioned real-time shadowing as one interesting aspect...
DW: We've put a lot of work into the real-time shadowing and lighting. We're really pushing the PlayStation to the limit in terms of graphics. Of course, the film is absolutely gorgeous, so we have a lot to live up to.

GF: The game is currently in development for PlayStation. Why was a Dreamcast version shunned, especially given the ease of Windows CE ports?
DW: Fox Interactive does not currently have any plans to put *Titan A.E.* on the Dreamcast, though frankly, I would love to. We certainly discussed it.

But you're right: *Titan A.E.* would make an awesome Dreamcast game.

GF: What about PlayStation 2? Don't you think a game of this caliber would suit that platform perfectly?
DW: Yep. PlayStation 2. Sounds like a great idea. But it's not in development.

GF: Now, previously, you guys had mentioned using in-game graphics for the cut-scenes (à la *Metal Gear Solid*). Regardless of the opening or closing cinemas (which we already know are rendered), why didn't you guys want to use more CG?
DW: We're doing something unique with the opening and closing sequences, which I don't want to give away just yet.

But you're right. The majority of the cut-scenes are done in the game engine, in order to give the game a consistent cinematic feel. The intent is to keep you completely immersed in the world of the game, rather than jump you out of the game to show brief bits of eye candy.

GF: Generally speaking, the majority of past movie-to-game translations have been mediocre at best (i.e., *The Fifth Element*, *The Crow: City of Angels*, etc.). How are you guys going to ensure that *Titan*, the game, will better mimic the movie's integrity?
DW: I think we've done a great job maintaining the integrity of the film. We have a very good relationship with the filmmakers, and this close collaboration should help ensure that the game is every bit as good as the film.

GF: Was it difficult creating a virtual counterpart to the Drej?
DW: Yes. The Drej are awesome in the film, but difficult to translate to the PlayStation. But I think you'll be impressed by the end result. We still have a few surprises up our sleeves...



GF: Is there anything in particular you'd like our readers to know about *Titan A.E.*?
DW: Uh, yeah.... *Titan A.E.* opens June 16 at a theater near you. Check your local listings, but seriously, if you like the movie—and you will—then you'll love the game!

GameFan would like to thank David Wisehart for his time. For more info on Mr. Wisehart, see Other Stuff, pages 166-117.


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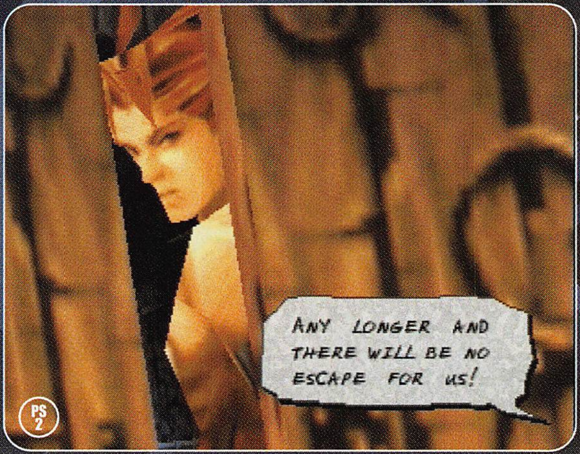
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PS2®

It slices, it dices, it feeds the homeless and takes care of Little Timmy... it's Sony's all-in-one home entertainment system, the PlayStation 2, available now in Japan for the low retail price of 39,800¥! Yes, for just $550-$1200 (or your first-born male child), you, too, can own a PS2! But will it become the centerpiece of your home entertainment center—or merely a dusty, redheaded stepchild to your audio amps? What exactly will you get for such a price, and is it worth it? Well, let's see...

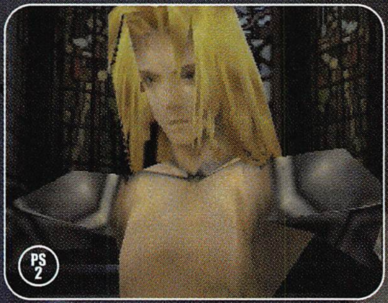
Anyone that's been to a video game store in the past five years knows that the PlayStation 1 (PSX) has dominated the market for a very long time. Sony's not one to overlook a sizable resource like it, either, so it designed the PlayStation 2 to run PSX games, as well—so, essentially, as soon as PS2 owners unpack the box, they'll have an enormous library of games to choose from (i.e., all the regular PlayStation games). Best of all, the top games for the PlayStation are available as part of the Greatest Hits collection, which is sold at discount prices (a very good deal, considering the organs you've probably donated just to get hold of this PS2).

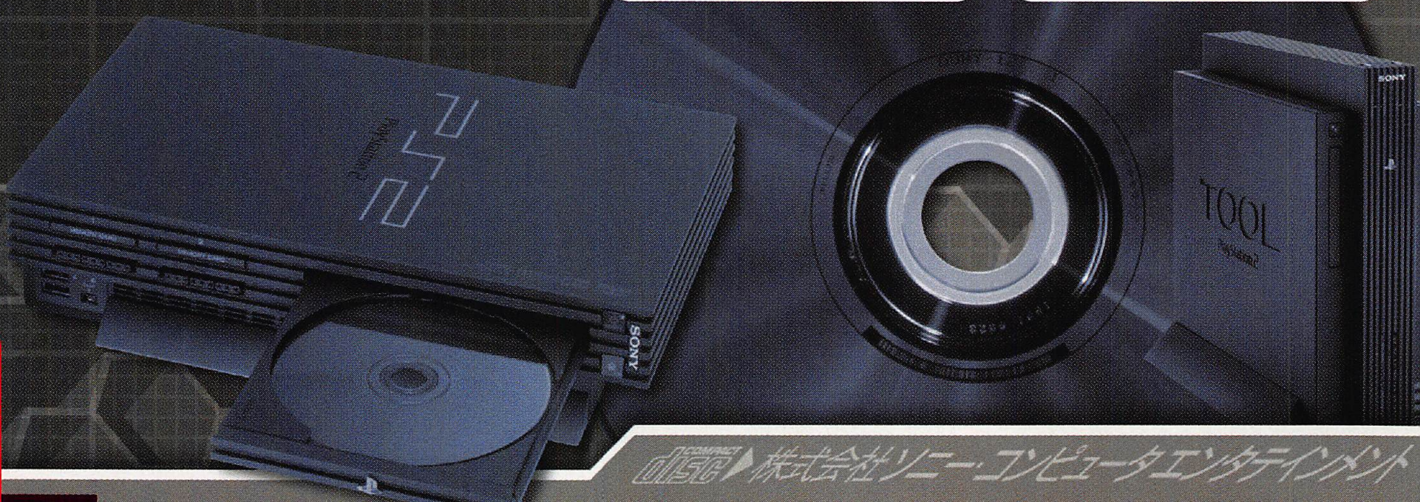




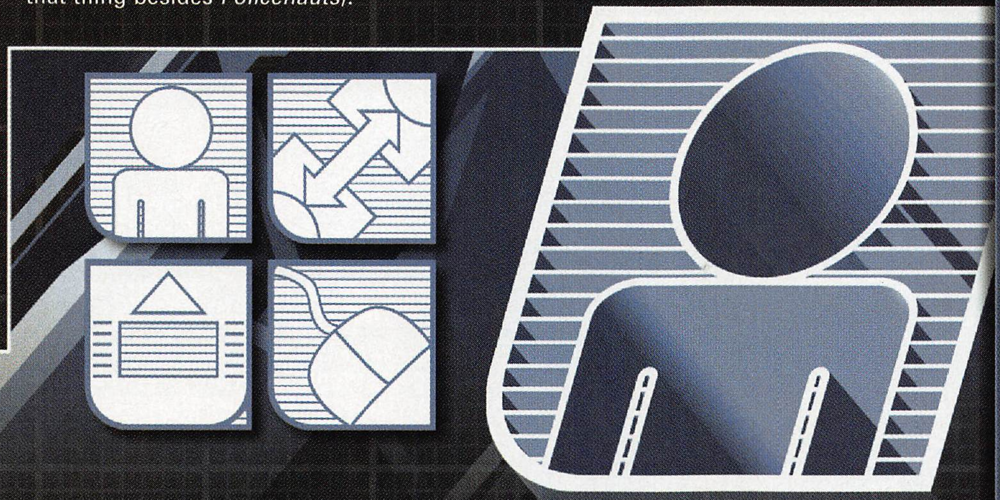
Not only can you play PSX games on the PS2, though, you can also take advantage of the system's super-beefy hardware. Boot a PSX game up, and you're given the choice of running your PS2 as a straight PS, or with PS2 enhancements; activate this second handy feature, and certain games will benefit from better textures. Take, for instance, *Vagrant Story*—thanks to the wonders of bilinear filtering, this game looks much better on the PS2 than on the PSX. Check out the comparison shots on the right to see for yourself! The PS2 also has a faster CD/DVD drive than a PS, so certain games (e.g., *Resident Evil 3, Final Fantasy VIII, Street Fighter Alpha 3*) load faster. It's important to note, however, that while many games run better on a PS2, certain games run better on a PSX... You'll just have to experiment to figure out what works and what doesn't.







If you're a PlayStation owner, you'll also be overjoyed to learn that those 'old' PSX peripherals are compatible with the PS2—old Dual Shocks, Negcons, Jogcons, etc.—so they won't become obsolete for quite some time (except for the PS mouse... I have yet to find a legitimate use for that thing besides *Policenauts*).





The final trick up Sony's marketing sleeve is the PS2's ability to play DVD movies. Anyone that's witnessed the power of DVD movies knows that this format is the way of the future, featuring exceptionally high resolution, bundles of extra goodies, and one low price. It's only a matter of time before every household has a DVD player, and Sony's doing its part to speed up the process.

If you own an import PS2, however, know that it's only supposed to play Region 2-coded DVDs, so, unfortunately, American DVDs are unplayable on Japanese PS2s. Of course, within days of the console's release, a number of hackers stumbled upon a code to enable playback of U.S. DVDs on the PS2. To activate it, you'll need the original DVD driver disk that first came with the system; then, simply hold any direction on an old PS controller when the system is booting up. Just hold it until the movie starts, and voila! American DVDs will be playable on a Japanese PS2. Of course, Sony didn't intend for this 'code' to be released, so the company promptly issued a recall of the first-run PS2s... All units shipped after the 'hack' came with an updated driver disk that prevents such a bypass. So unless playing American DVDs on your console is that important to you, it's advisable that you wait until the PS2's released here in the fall so you won't need a first-run PS2 and a copy of *Tips 'N Tricks* to watch your favorite movies.

So you've done your homework and know all about the wonders of the PS2... But if you dig around enough, people will tell you that all is not rosy in Sony's Garden of Eden... Naysayers cite technical problems such as faulty memory cards, not enough texture RAM, no anti-aliasing, and Hi-Fi's classic "interlacing debacle." Not to mention that there's already a PS2 game that looks worse than its DC counterpart (*Dead or Alive 2*)... But should all this talk dissuade you from that bank-breaking purchase? Not if you're anxious to play the games. Just know that all consoles have limitations, and we're only seeing early, first-generation titles right now. With enough time and resources, developers will be able to figure out ways to accomplish what they want to do; we just have to be patient. **Eggo**

Upcoming Japanese PS2 Games

Tekken Tag Tournament (Namco) Fighting	March 30
Dead or Alive 2 (Tecmo) Fighting	March 30
Driving Emotion Type-S (Square) Racing	March 30
Gradius III & IV (Konami) Shooter	April 13
Let's Play Majongg 2 (Konami) Mahjongg	April 13
Sky Surfer (Idea Factory) Sports	April 20
Primal Image (Atlus) Modeling	April 27
EverGrace (From Software) Adventure	April 27
0 Story (Enix) Love Story	April 27
Snowboard Super Cross (EA) Sports	April
EX Billiards (Takara) Sports	April
Hresvelgr (???) Racing	May
TVDJ (SCEI) Puzzle	Spring
Jikkyou Powerful Pro Baseball 7 (Konami) Sports	Spring
All Star Pro Wrestling (Square) Sports	Spring
Gekikuukan Pro Baseball: At the End of the Century 1999 (Square) Sports	Spring



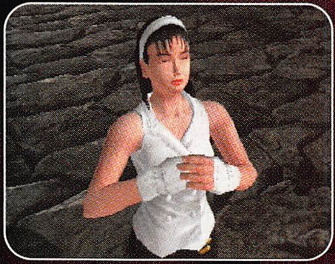




Tekken is one of those love it or hate it games. Lucky me, I'm the former and thus get to write the review. There's a world of players out there waiting with bated breath to play the latest *Tekken*; until last night I was one of them. Just as there are fans waiting to play *Tekken*, there are also detractors out there ready and waiting to shred *Tekken Tag* to pieces, more so than any other PS2 game, anyway. Why? Because it's Namco, because it's Sony's PS2 and because jaded unagamers have nothing better to do.



TEKKEN TAG TOURNAMENT






First things first: *Tekken Tag Tournament* isn't the next best thing since sliced bread, but it's pretty damn close. Namco's never made any claims about *Tekken*. Nakumura-san's company never put *Tekken* on a gold-plated platinum pedestal, we did. And why shouldn't we? It plays well, is easy to pick up and learn and like Othello, and has many different degrees of skill. It also helps that *Tekken* looks and sound better than any other fighter on the PlayStation and now PlayStation2. Who can forget or deny how awesome *Tekken 2*'s intro and endings looked? Same goes for *Tekken 3* and *Tekken*, for its time, anyhow.

Tekken Tag Tournament sports two individual rendered intros, one from the arcade and an exclusive PS2 exclusive cut-scene. The obligatory attract mode embu has non-famous fighters performing katas in an all-too-familiar courtyard.

It's incredible how much better everything looks with more polygons, a better frame rate and higher bit textures; I'm still shocked. Eddy Gordo's stage is bustling with activity, from the surrounding onlookers to the interactive grass; clumps of grass are crushed when stepped. Lei's urban battleground is covered with puddles that reflect the neon lights above—no character reflections, though. Anyone that remembers the original *Tekken* tech demo (you know, the one with Paul and a shirtless Jin going toe to toe) will instantly recognize this stage. I'll be the first one to tell you it doesn't look *as* good as it did then, but that's a drop in a bucket. Look at any stage; I dare you to find any truly glaring no-nos. Think the attention to detail in the backgrounds is lacking (it's a rhetorical statement, your answer should be no)? If that doesn't grab you, the new and improved characters models will. Smart move, Namco, really. Most players' eyes will be fixed on Nina and



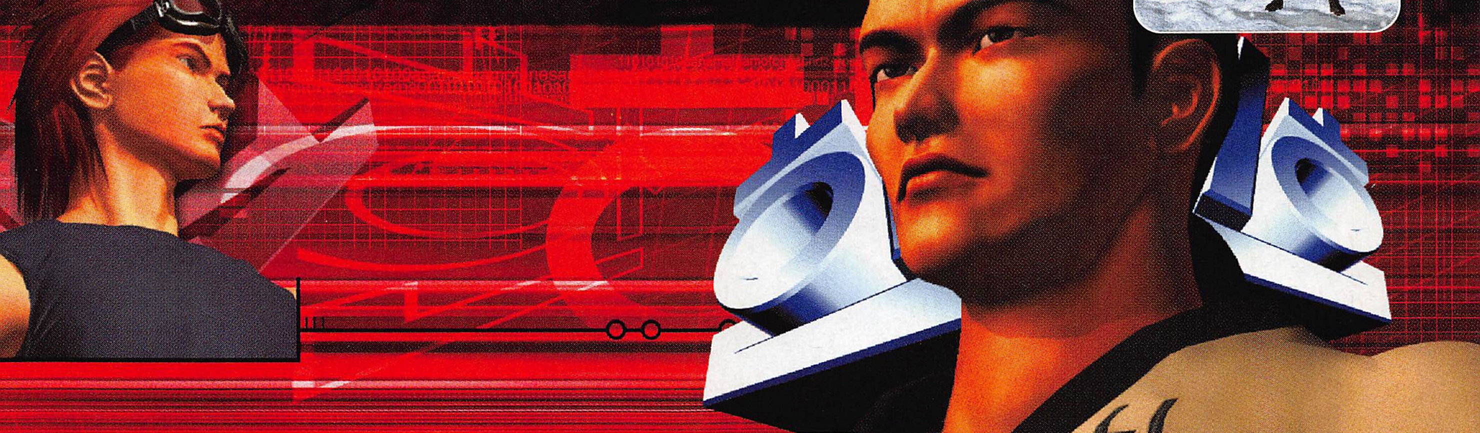




every other combatant. You'll have a lot to look at and appreciate. Kazuya's back is more ripped than Mr. Universe; Anna's blue dress flows like real satin. I can't say sound has been enhanced as much as the graphics, but *Tekken* has always been the king of sound.

This is a tag game and using Sony's PS2 tap up to four players can go at it. Whenever a player tags out his buddy enters controlling the secondary character. Of course, each player can choose who he wants to play as. Gameplay couldn't be better and four players makes it that much more enticing. The combo madness translates well, too, with almost every arcade aspect being faithfully reproduced. Every arcade character is back in case anyone is worried that their fave is missing. Two words will sum it up better than anything else: "It's *Tekken.*"











And for anyone ready to complain about the carousel effect (the floor moves independently of the backgrounds), "jaggies", the inclusion of *Tekken Bowl* or whatever—move on and get a life. There's so much more to complain about in life than a video game; how about the price of gas, why the Lakers suck as much as they have (Reub's note: Where've you been? Under a rock? The Lakers are playing better than they have in *years*!), or why I can't reverse a combo in progress in *DoA2*. What it boils down to is that *Tekken* is very fun-tipping the fun scale and replay factor more than even *Ridge Racer V*. If there's a must have on the PS2 this is it.

Every console needs a killer app or two, or three. The Genesis had its share, PlayStation had one immediately with *Ridge Racer* and so did the fun machine (*Super Mario 64*). *Tekken Tag* isn't a killer app, but it doesn't need to be. What *TTT* is, is a great upgraded, juiced up game that everyone already loves. Minor flaws aside, *Tekken Tag* is a beauty to see in motion and play. I really hate being the one to tell you to "buy this" and "buy that," but if you own an import PS2, you owe it to yourself to buy this one. If not, why the heck do you own a PS2, for *Stepping Selection*? I say go for the impulse import purchase, your PS2 will thank you. As for me, as soon as I finish this last sentence I'm heading home for a weekend of *Tekken Tag Tournament* goodness with all my *Tekken*-head friends.

Cerberus can be found in the secluded Mishima Island compound, practicing his Iron Fist Tag Tournament.

Viewpoint Score :97	Developer - Namco	1-4 Players	Cerberus:
	Publisher - Namco	Available Now Japan/Fall U.S.	Where's Pac-Man?

R Review

Reunited and It Feels So Good

You know those silly little 'separated at birth' books you'll sometimes stumble across while traipsing through your local bookseller? How the people invariably look superficially similar to one another at first blush, but the longer you stare at them the more clear it becomes that they're really not all that similar at all—and sometimes, downright dissimilar to the point of clearly being two different people. Well folks, such is the case with Tecmo's port of its NAOMI/Dreamcast super-title, *Dead or Alive 2* to the just-birthed PlayStation 2. While they share a lot of similarities, it's clear that one of these babies is going to be attending special ed classes in the not-too-distant future.

Et Tu Tecmo?

Forgetting all the ugly politics that wound up making *Dead or Alive 2* a US-exclusive on Dreamcast and a Japanese exclusive on PlayStation 2 ("This game could only be done on DVD" to quote some *DOA2* ads in the Japanese mags), what we found most surprising is that the DC rev is actually superior almost across the board. Considering that Team Ninja (Tecmo's dev team responsible for the series) had plenty of time to work on the PS2 port (at least 6 months) it's odd that this is the case, especially given the supposed much superior hardware involved. Those that dabble in inane conspiracy theories (Oliver Stone, et al) might even speculate that this was all a scheme cooked up by Sega and Tecmo to show that the DC is indeed better than the PS2... of course, nobody's that crazy, right Fury?

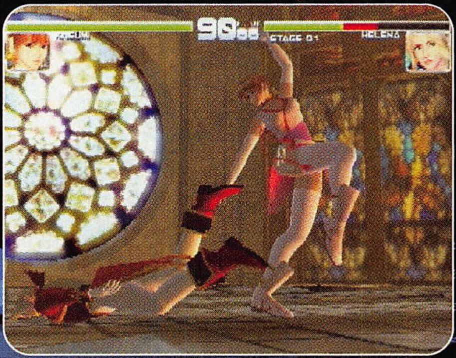
Moving Along...

While I could go on at, at length, and re-review *DOA2* for PS2, I'm not. See, the games play virtually identically so the same low learning curve, relatively shallow gameplay stands for this version just as it does in the DC version—so if you want the nitty-gritty details on gameplay, I suggest you pick up Vol. 8 Issue 4 (*Munch's Oddysee* cover) and peruse that review. Instead, I'm going to break down exactly what differences there are ('cause there are quite a few) and you can be the judge as to which version you'd rather play. So without further ado:











Clash of the Titans



Here's a listing of the subtle (and not-so-subtle) differences between the Dreamcast and PlayStation 2 versions of *Dead or Alive 2* (it's not for the faint of heart or anybody less than the hyper-anal).

Dreamcast Version:

Cleaner, more colorful, higher-res and more detailed textures—check out the Death Valley stage for an obvious difference (cables vs. goraud-shaded yellow bars on the outside fence) and the Demon's Church is much more vibrant and 'alive.'

Larger characters—sure, we're probably the only group to notice this (read, hyper-anal), but it was certainly apparent enough that we caught it before we even put the two together, head-to-head.

Better animation on certain incidental details—specifically flags flapping in the breeze (smooth and eye-pleasing on DC, painful, seizure-inducing stuttering on PS2).

A *fraction* (virtually none) of the aliasing problems that often render the PS2 display as clean as a nice smoggy, LA morning.

Cleaner, sharper visuals with higher poly models and better lighting on cut scenes.

More selectable costumes at the outset of the game.





PlayStation 2 Version:

Certain improved environmental effects: blowing snow, water kicked up in streams, some additional lighting (in the Tag arena, for instance) and much better water effects (*nice* specularity in the dojo stage).

Shading on the characters looks a bit smoother and more eye-pleasing.

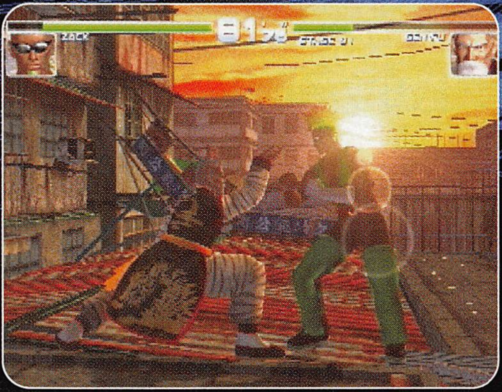
A trippy, headache-inducing psychedelic effect on the last stage vs. the boss.

MUCH higher frame rate (60 fps) on cut scenes.

Three new levels **not** available in the DC rev: The Crimson (rooftop battle a la *VF3*), The Prairie (desert stage a la *VF3*), and the Koku An (um, well, the dojo a la *VF3*) stage.

Must unlock costumes that are immediately available on DC rev.

Painful (and I do mean agonizing) aliasing issues on the characters **and** backgrounds—easily the single biggest flaw of the PS2 rev. Some scenes look very poor running on PS2 (grates in the Tag Arena being the most obvious and painful example).











And in case you're wondering, we had both games running on the same exact TV (20" Sony Trinitrons) with the exact same calibrations (color, hue, sharpness, etc.) side-by-side for hours on end. We tried everything from composite video (as a baseline, and the one that helped the PS2 compare **most** favorably with the DC rev) to S-Video (which brought the aliasing problems out most apparently in the PS2 rev) to VGA for DC and component video for PS2 (on a 36" inch Sony Vega TV... let's just say component is not the way to go on PS2—until (if?) they fix the aliasing issues, <shudder>).

It's important to stress that they play identically, however most of the staff opted for the DC pad over the PS2 pad (minus Cerberus, of course).

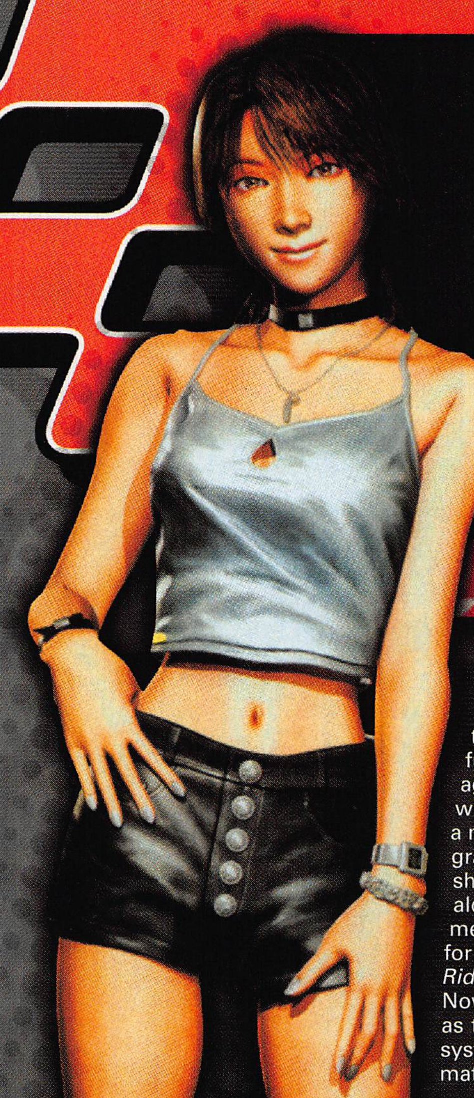
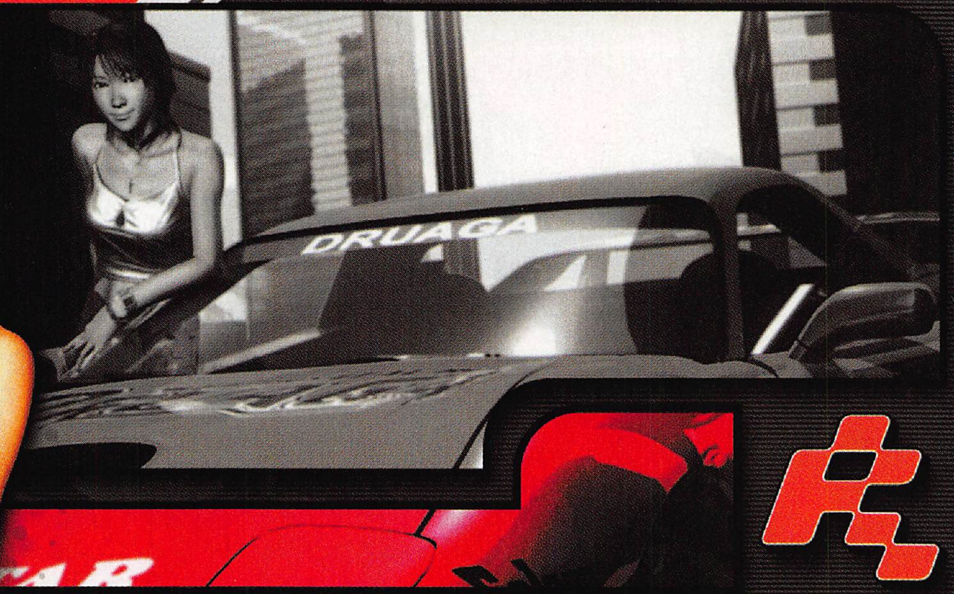
Choose Your Poison

Overall, the DC rev comes out on top as far as the better package goes. And lucky you, you can buy it right now without having to import a super-priced PS2 and a sub-par version of the game. Still, you really can't go wrong with either one, though you'll definitely not see me or most of the rest of the staff playing anything but the DC rev. Hey, at least the PS2 still has *Tekken Tag*...<snicker>.

A lot of people think ECM and a grapefruit tree were separated at birth... upon closer inspection, though, he was discovered to be at least three times as bitter as the average grapefruit.

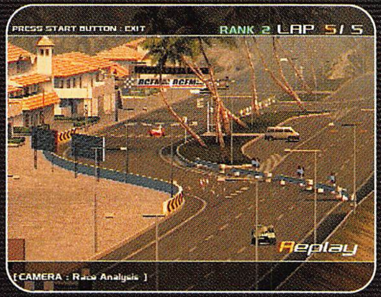
Viewpoint Score: 88	Developer - Tecmo	1 Player	ECM: Dreamcast 1,
	Publisher - Tecmo	Available Now Japan	PlayStation 2, 0



Real racing roots

Racing games hold a special place in my heart; they provide an experience few other genres can touch. When executed right, they offer the perfect fusion of graphics, speed and sound—the total package. Unfortunately, the annals of gaming are littered with the carcasses of many a bad racer, and exploiting a new console to its fullest potential generally takes programmers years... Namco pleased many gamers by shipping a solid version of its arcade game *Ridge Racer* alongside the launch of Sony's PlayStation in 1994, and met with much success. Unfortunately, Namco's known for refinement and repetition, not innovation—and the *Ridge Racer* formula's changed very little over the years (tantamount to bi-annual upgrades). Now *Ridge Racer V* has been released alongside the PlayStation 2, and has been hailed by many as the only triple-A PS2 launch title. Others call it a 'true testament' to the power of the new system (which isn't always a good thing, mind you). The question remains, though: Is it the ultimate in the series, or just a rehash of a good game with a massive, Dyan Cannon, facelift?



Everything new is old again...

From the moment you load *RRV*, it's obvious that things have changed dramatically. Gone is the CG intro from *R4*, replaced by a real-time display of the amazing new Ridge City. Its buildings seem much more like their real-world counterparts, with glassy facades that sparkle and glimmer as you pass; its cars, rendered in all their ultra-shiny glory, zip around the track with physics comparable to *Gran Turismo*.

The actual game, though, looks stunningly similar, and controls exactly like every other *RR* game. It's got crisp textures and little pop-up. The only drawback is the lack of anti-aliasing in advancing lines (or a hack job rendering engine, depending upon who you ask this minute). Though the game runs at a very high frame-rate (somewhere in the neighborhood of 60 fps), distant lines tend to look jagged and somewhat disconnected. This can be unnerving, especially during the night tracks, making it very hard to judge the turns and forces the rote memorization of each one.

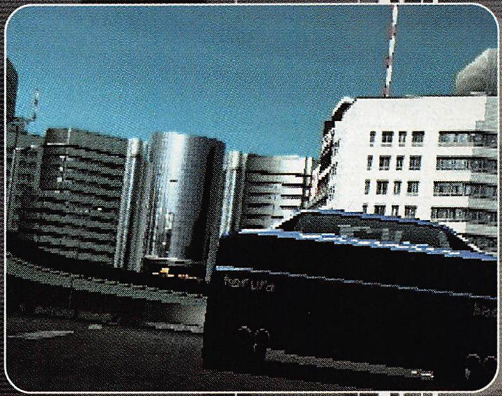
Sadly, it won't take long to run through all seven courses and get to know each of them intimately. If you take away the oval (which is only used for the fastest cars in the game), you're left with six courses that are all variations of one track. Granted, they include some new twists, and feel much longer than those in the past, but they all take the original *Ridge Racer* run as a starting point. Namco's created a sizeable city with tracks running all through it, but the variety just isn't as great as Psygnosis' *Wip3out* (which employed the same 'one town, many tracks' theory). Worse than that—some of the tracks *are* the *RR* tracks of old, which might give gamers some joy with their familiarity, but are ultimately




RIDGER

uninspiring and weak. *R4* was stung by a few overlapping variations, but overall, it had multiple unique tracks. In that light, *RRV* is quite a step backwards.





Blistering pace

Racing games are a different breed, though, and I'm willing to endure some mediocrity if they convey true sensations of speed. It's not enough to make the visuals faster. You have to make them faster as the cars follow suit. If I jump from a 150-mph car to a 200-mph car, there had better be a noticeable difference. The PS games *Wipeout XL* and *Rage Racer* (not to mention *Daytona CE* on the Sega Saturn) are prime examples of games that get high marks, not for looking fast, but for looking *faster*. Progressing through *RRV*'s three staggered GP events (Standard, Extra and Maximum) will grant access to increasingly faster cars and engines, but the sensation (even when edging 400 kph on the oval track) falls short of white-knuckle speed. Its speed is solid, but it's also consistent, even when you replace any one of the six standard cars with the upgraded extra versions (complete with new engines). Mastering the GP will eventually open up Duel Mode (race other cars and win them), a 99-lap endurance race and the hidden car modifications in the game... Don't be fooled by that name, though; the modifications are superficial, including new paint schemes and numbers on car doors.

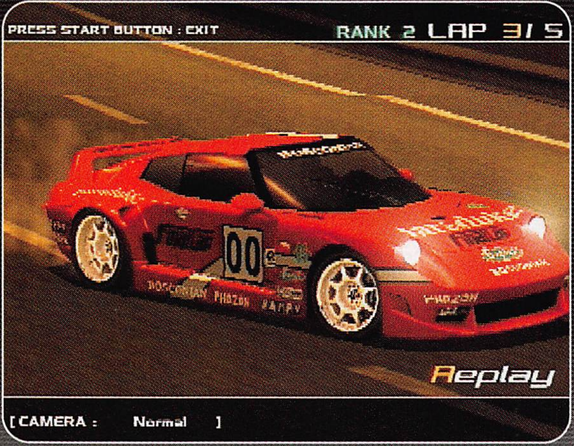


The other features in the game are a mixed bag... Namco's canned the in-house music and replaced it with famous Japanese and European mixes. The result's a solid soundtrack of Trance and Rock/Techno that doesn't get old quite as fast as you might think. There's also a two-player split-screen mode, but it seems to showcase the rushed nature of the game and not the proposed power of the PS2. The screens are half their normal sizes, and both fogging and pop-up rear their ugly heads, making it tough for anyone who hasn't put hours into the single-player game to effectively judge where the turns are.

Alas, poor Reiko, I knew her well...

A lot has been said about the glaring omission of Reiko Nagase as the game's race queen (she's been replaced by Ai Fukami), but Namco's omitted another feature, an omission that I find quite disturbing... The rearview mirror—a stalwart since *Ridge Racer Revolution*—has sadly gone the way of the dinosaur, replaced by a button that allows you to look behind your car. Needless to say (but I'll say it anyway), unless you can anticipate exactly where a trailing car's headed in a nanosecond, or use the feature on a straightaway, it's even closer to useless than I thought.

The game's still fun, though, so much so that I now have a blister on my right thumb from playing it all night long. It lacks the 'kick' of games past, but if you've ever wanted to play *Rave Racer* (the last arcade game in the series), this is your ticket. Others might want to pass on it and wait for something deeper and more fulfilling to come down the pike. Ultimately, *Ridge Racer V* is graphically stunning but lacking in game play—something that all NAMCO fans should be used to by now...



Kodomo's forgetting the fact that, since his Red Bull intake went up to a case a day, ALL racing games look slower...



RACER V

Viewpoint Score :92	Developer - Namco Publisher - Namco	1-2 Players Available Now Japan/Fall U.S.	KODOMO: Gimme those keys, Dango!

R REVIEW

Street Fighter Never Looked This Good... In 3D.

Street Fighter EX has never been a pretty series... until now. Arika's priority has always been to keep the gameplay as close to that of a 2D *Street Fighter* as possible, but the characters have always been blocky, ugly and lacking in detail—outcasts from the Capcom clan, like a red-headed stepchild version of Ryu, if you will... With the cataclysmic leap to PlayStation 2, though, Arika's able to pack a whole lot more polygonal power into that Dragon Punch, and the end results are better-looking characters, flashier lighting effects and more fighters onscreen at one time. *SFEX3* looks great for an *EX* game—at least in comparison to Arika's previous efforts. Yet compared to other fighting games in the console market, it just doesn't hold up. *Dead or Alive 2* for the Dreamcast easily kicks it through a stained glass window, *Soul Calibur* cleanly smites it with a battle axe and the upcoming *Tekken Tag Tournament* on PS2 clearly knocks it away with a sparkling Death Fist. *SFEX3*'s graphics are good—but visually, they can't hold their own compared to the fighting game elite.





Street Fighter EX Tag Tournament?

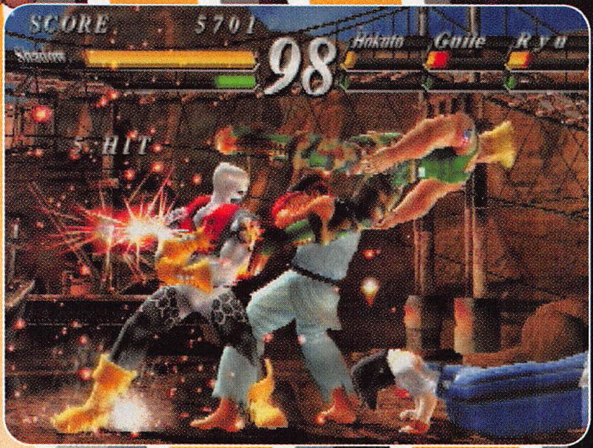
In what's becoming a disturbingly regular trend in fighting games, *Street Fighter EX 3* lets you duke it out in two-on-two tag matches, and even switch partners mid-combo. This creates much more character and combo variety, and adds a lot more intensity to the matches. With the advent of momentary combos (like a special move cancel) and the already flashy super cancels, *SFEX3* offers the most insane combos you'll ever see in a *Street Fighter* game...



But Does It Have Game?

Street Fighter EX's gameplay has never been as fast-paced as (or felt quite like) a 2D *Street Fighter* (Arika needs to release *Street Fighter EX 3 Turbo Hyperfighting*... and no, I'm not joking). *EX* has always treated *SF* fans decently, though; occasional instances bring back fond 2D memories realized in full polygonal glory (like seeing Guile backfist Ryu when he throws a close fireball). Also, the *EX* series has always offered over-the-top combos as dizzying as Capcom's *Vs.* series, full of flashy super cancels and juggles galore. You haven't lived until you've seen a combo of four different supers (six, if you're truly ninja)—and they're only available in *Street Fighter EX 3*. The game offers a refreshing alternative to the hackneyed world of fighting games... though, eventually, you and your friends will go back to Old Faithful, whatever that may be for you (*Virtua Fighter 3tb*, *Street Fighter Alpha 3* or *Tekken 3*). Still, *Street Fighter EX 3* can be fun for a few weeks... especially when building your own character.





Build Your Own Shotokan...

The most appealing feature of the first two *SFEX* games was the Expert/Training mode—basically, the street fighter school. In this mode, each character was assigned a certain number of missions to accomplish that ranged in difficulty from easy (say, pulling off a two-in-one combo) to moderate (i.e., executing a super combo) to hard (executing a triple super cancel combo) to insane (staying in the air for ten seconds). No matter what your level of *Street Fighter* proficiency may have been, there was always a mission that would test the limits of your skill.

Sadly, that Expert mode's been removed from *SFEX3*. Instead, Capcom's included an all-new Character Edit mode. To build the fighter of your dreams, you'll have to purchase special moves and supers from the neighborhood store. Can't afford that Denjin Ha-do-ken now? Maybe next

week... Now, to earn the 'money' to buy those moves, you'll have to complete a series of missions in the street fighter school. There's only one problem: Building the character gets in the way of enjoying the missions. The first two *Street Fighter EX* games let you hammer out the missions one after another. *Street Fighter EX 3* hampers such progress, though, because certain tasks require certain moves to complete. You can't just roll through missions, you have to keep updating your fighter. Not only that, but after buying moves, they must be **equipped**, as well, which requires time-consuming menu manipulation. I'm sure the Character Edit mode sounded like a great idea on paper, but it really disrupts the flow of the training missions. If only Arika had offered the two modes separately, my score for the game would've been higher.





You knew it was coming... The Good, the Bad and the Combos.

My favorite part about *Street Fighter EX 3* is the ending of the Original Mode. Instead of a boring ending that players will ignore after seeing once, the programmers throw a ton of endless enemies out (seven at a time) while the credits roll. It's a Bruce Lee-like fight for your life, scrapping against a gang of bad guys who'll all attack at the same time. Fortunately, most of them die from one hit, and you're gifted with an unlimited super gauge. It's basically a minute's worth of carnage,





with supers going off constantly and bodies flying everywhere... There's even a meter at the bottom of the screen that records how many bodies you bag (every time you kill one, a new guy's sent to replace his fallen comrade). I swear, one of the enemies looks like Hugo and grows like Doshin the Giant, depending on how many enemies you knock out.

There's one problem with the ending, though—when eight characters come on-screen at the same time, each throwing out special moves and supers, the game slows down like you wouldn't believe. This is probably the worst slow-down you'll ever see in a game, and it happens quite a bit. The normal game slows down enough for supers, tags (i.e., when more than two characters are on-screen) and special moves—but at the end, the slow-down really rears its ugly head. Still, the fun of killing over a hundred guys in one minute is a more than adequate payoff. It's unfortunate that the much-touted PS2 is already showing hardware limits—but remember, this is first-generation stuff we're talking about here. *SFEX4* could be something entirely different...





Eggo's always dreamed of slapping down 100 challengers in a minute ("dreamed" being the operative word).

VIEWPOINT SCORE :84	DEVELOPER - ARIKA PUBLISHER - CAPCOM	1-4 PLAYERS AVAILABLE NOW JAPAN/FALL U.S.	EGGO: AS SLOW AS ECM DRIVING BY AN ANGER MANAGEMENT CENTER.

REVIEW



KESSEN





In the past, I cringed whenever a strategy game like *Warhammer* reared its ugly head. After all, what could be worse than losing irreplaceable hours of your life to a strategy game that looked like ants fighting over a patch of grass? Honestly, I can think of only one fate worse... flight sims <shudder> (hopefully, I didn't call notice to the flight sim gods by invoking their names, or I'll be previewing *Eagle 1 Harrier Attack X* next month). So what would it take to convert a non-believer like me to the Dark Side of the strategy universe? Simple: a PlayStation 2, a $5,000,000 budget and a game called *Kessen*.

I won't try to pull the wool over your eyes by touting it as something more than it is: *Kessen* is simply *Warhammer* interspersed with lots of high-quality CG and battle cut-scenes, brought to new life with amazing in-game graphics. But fundamentally, it's still your standard real-time war strategy game—order the ants around and launch an assault on the other ants (it's about that ugly, too, with very primitive graphics and almost no animation). Unlike Koei's *Romance of The Three Kingdoms* series, though, there's no resource management here. It's purely a game of making decisions on the battlefield, issuing orders to generals and improving troop morale (too bad there's no Cher in this version of 16th-century Japan... though I'm not quite sure she would *improve* morale).



Enough with this boring 'strategyspeak...' I know why you're still reading—you want the low-down on this juicy, next-generation eye candy. There are **a lot** of CG cut-scenes in *Kessen* which advance the story between battles. They're dazzling in quality and quite lengthy (five minutes long, at times), and make good use of the storage space of the DVD medium. Furthermore, the sound's just as impressive as the visuals in the FMV, the voices actually match the characters mouths, and











the background music heightens the drama even further. Seriously, these cut-scenes are probably where most of the game's extravagant budget went to. Even its battle cut-scenes are impressive.

Instead of ordering your Xs to attack the enemy Os (as in *Warhammer*), then watching your ants duke it out as the occasional pixelated body falls off its horse, *Kessen* sets a new high watermark for visuals in strategy games... perhaps even PS2 games overall (it really is the best-looking PS2 launch title). Every time groups clash, a battle unfolds in full polygonal glory. Opposing forces take sides and line up in formation, weapons are drawn and all hell breaks loose... Volleys of arrows are fired, rows of cannons are discharged and sword-wielding packs of cavalry are unleashed. On the other side, infantrymen fall clutching their arrow-filled chests, cannonballs explode amidst a pack of mounted musketeers and routed archers scatter for their lives as they're cut down from behind by stampeding cavalry. Presentation—conveying a very movie-like feel—is of the utmost importance in this game, and players can see it every time a camera dramatically pans down a line of soldiers awaiting the command to fire.

Of course, through all of this carnage, you don't control a thing. You don't physically move a soldier while he's fighting, and you can't turn the tide of battle single-handedly. You're just a spectator watching events unfold. These battle scenes are a large part of the newfound lure this game has to offer, though—it's what separates *Kessen* on PS2 from *Dark Omen* on PS. There's a huge difference between seeing pixelated ants disappear and witnessing a legion of pikemen raise their spears at the last second as a wave of cavalry comes crashing into their midst (yes, the scene was ripped straight out of *Braveheart* and inserted in this game). It definitely drives home the point that your soldiers are actually fighting when you see the chaos that ensues, even if the cut-scenes get repetitive. Hey, if you ever get tired of watching these glorious battles, you can just skip them with the simple push of a button—but then, you're just playing *Warhammer* on your PS2.





The music definitely befits this game of epic conquest. Its sweeping score sounds like a Hollywood production reminiscent of *Conan the Barbarian*—which is basically what it is. The story is excellent, as well, and it changes depending on the outcome of your battles (even if you lose, the war goes on).



There's only one tiny gripe I have with *Kessen*: The cut-scene in which you give an order for a group to move is unnecessary. Every time you issue a movement order, you'll watch as the general points to the horizon and leads his troops in that direction. The game would flow much better if the cut-scenes were restricted to warfare only.

Honestly, playing a strategy game in Japanese without knowing the language is definitely difficult. Unlike some RPGs, in which basic knowledge of katakana can get you through most of the menu options, *Kessen* is all Kanji-ed up with bits of hiragana thrown in for good measure. Still, with some tenacity, a lot of experimenting and an online F.A.Q., you can stumble your way through *Kessen* without knowing Japanese. This isn't a killer app that I would buy an import PS2 for, but if you already own one, *Kessen*'s worth a look. And those that don't have an extra $800 lying around can always pick up the U.S. version of the game when the PS2 launches here sometime this fall...

Eggo would like to point out that no actual horses were harmed in the making of this game.

Viewpoint Score: 91	Developer - Koei	1 Player	Eggo: Female
	Publisher - Koei	Available Now Japan/Fall U.S.	ninjas? Sign me up!

R Review

I'll be honest—I've got a bad case of buyer's remorse. The overwhelming impulse to buy every brand-new import system has broken both my bank and my pride time and time again. Believe me, sanity plays a small role in most of my decisions (witness my purchase of *Super Magnetic Niu Niu*), and when the PS2 hit, I came a-running. ECM, the good soul that he is (though he generally masks his caring nature with cries of, "You idiot, are you freakin' insane?!"), nearly withheld a recent paycheck to keep me from blowing my March rent and car payment... Needless to say, there are a few creditors out there that are a bit unhappy about my recent antics—and last night, picking up SCE's *Fantavision* didn't help. Ya see, except for *Ridge Racer V* and *Street Fighter EX3*, there really haven't been any PS2 games I've been interested in... except for the PS2 fireworks exhibit. But was it really worth a purchase (and another potential kick in the ol' joy department)?

Imagine a tech demo released as a game (we tend to call it the Rage Software syndrome... hello, *Incoming?!?*), and you've pretty much envisioned *Fantavision*... Truthfully, it's a puzzle game at heart—but you'd be crazy to think that SCE didn't release its '4th of July simulator' solely to demonstrate the PS2's awesome particle effect power. It's beautiful, dazzling and entrancing... definitely a sight to behold. All the visuals in this 'game,' its huge explosions and small blasts alike, are just gorgeous, and are only enhanced by the brilliant stages that accompany them. From the streets of an insanely detailed Vegas-style city to an icy comet in the deepest regions of space, *Fantavision* is truly a graphical wonder. Regrettably, though, it's so good visually that it's more interesting to watch than it is to play. If you spend too much time salivating over the graphical display, you'll have a hard time keeping up with the action. What's that, you say? There's a game beneath this freakish, mind-blowing, jaw-dropping (feel free to include your own superlatives) eye candy? Man, I would've been content to just stare at this stuff!



As far as gameplay goes, *Fantavision* is standard fare for a puzzle game. Here's how it works: As different-colored fireworks litter the sky, you must select similar colors (in groups of three or more), then set them off before they rise too high and burn up. This is where things get interesting—players then have the opportunity to bridge different-colored projectiles with multi-colored fireworks. Basically, the goal is to chain so many shots together that a series of super-large explosions erupts—not unlike creating a large tree in *Bust a Move*. Certain fireworks (represented by varying symbols) can also be used in conjunction with existing links to cause an array of different explosions—daisy chains, willows, multi-blasts, etc. Collecting fireworks in the shape of letters (to spell out 'STARMINE') will grant players access to bonus stages, where things speed up considerably. Finally, to make matters a bit more hectic, certain space levels incorporate zero gravity, and rocket fireworks at you from nearly all sides of the screen. Hmm, you didn't know you could have explosions without oxygen, did you?

Fantavision's certainly one of the more unusual puzzlers I've seen, but a purchase (especially in light of the upcoming *Tekken Tag* and *Gradius* game releases) is probably not the best of ideas. Besides, the game features but one single-player mode, and that means that dragging your buddies over a bed of hot coals is (unfortunately) not an option... A $90 128-bit fireworks show?!? Boy, do I feel good about buying a PS2...

Fury's beginning to wonder how much his PS2 might fetch on eBay.











Fantavision™

FURY: A FIREWORKS SHOW AND NO BLOWN-UP LIMBS?	DEVELOPER - SONY PUBLISHER - SCEI	1 PLAYER AVAILABLE NOW JAPAN	VIEWPOINT SCORE: 78

REVIEW

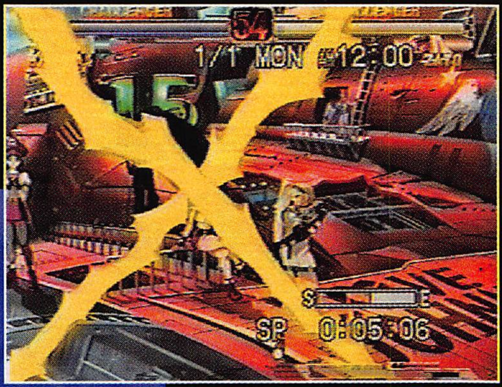

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MORE THAN A SEQUEL...
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Capcom's all-time, flagship fighting series once again goes 3-D with Street Fighter EX 2 Plus. Loaded with new enhancements, modes of play and an expanded cast of characters, Street Fighter EX 2 Plus drives home stunning 3-D graphics, lightning fast animation and Capcom's signature gameplay. Now the world's premier fighting series kicks it up a notch in Street Fighter EX 2 Plus.
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Animated Violence
Animated Blood
PlayStation

There are your mainstream *Street Fighters* of the world and then there are your back-alley-kick-your-ass-when-you're-not-looking dark horse fighting games. *Guilty Gear* on PlayStation—yeah, I'd venture to call that one a dark horse fighter. It came outta nowhere and got some recognition. Atlus did its best to get the name out there going as far as holding a tournament at UCLA. The mags treated it relatively well. Personally, I loved the game. It looked so slick and played just as well, almost like I was cheating on Capcom by enjoying myself with *Guilty Gear.* But why shouldn't I enjoy myself? The character design rivaled that of Capcom or SNK and the gameplay was easily the fastest on PlayStation. Heck, there were rumors that Capcom was bidding on *Guilty Gear.* There was a big hurdle for *Guilty Gear* before it could grab my attention. I'm not going to lie to you and say the animation was fluid—it wasn't—but it was passable. Plus it wasn't by one of the big names. I'm so biased towards my fighting games that if it doesn't say Capcom or Namco I won't play it for more than a day or two. Yet to this day, I still find time to play some *Guilty Gear.*



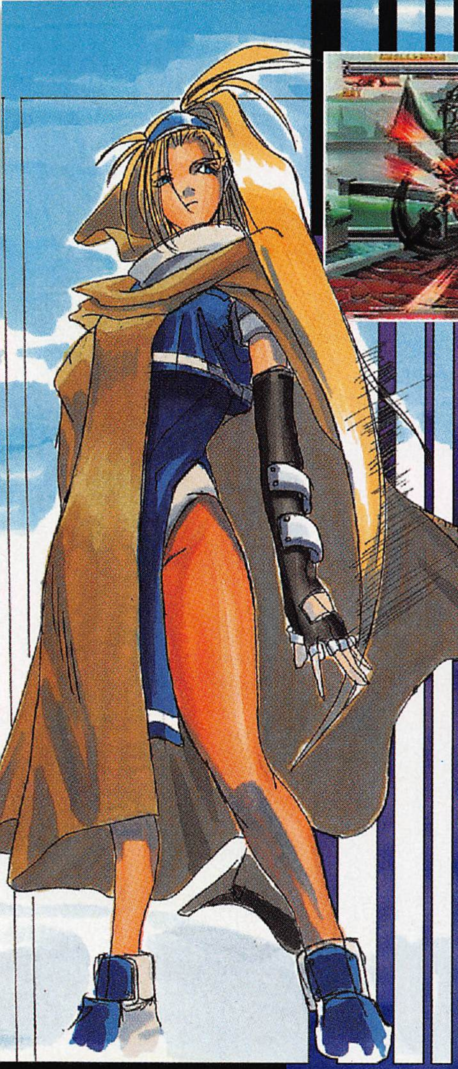




What surprised me about *Guilty Gear* was that a two-man virgin team composed of Daisuke Iwata and Hideyuki Abe designed and programmed it. Team Neo Blood had never done any games before *GG*; they were just two guys that love games, comics and heavy metal. According to Daisuke, *Guilty Gear* started as a 3D fighter, but early on, the project hardware limited the team's vision. Polys were axed to be replaced by hand drawn art. And, believe it or not, Team Neo Blood wasn't completely satisfied with the way *Guilty Gear* turned out. You sure could've fooled me. I thought *Guilty*



CERBERUS: MORE ANIMATION THAN AN ANIME MOVIE!	DEVELOPER - ARC SYSTEMS	1-2 PLAYERS
	PUBLISHER - NOT YET	AVAILABLE N/A



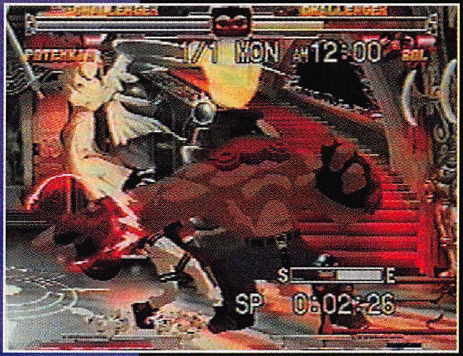




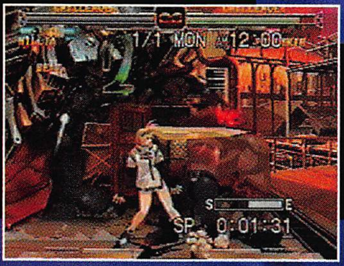


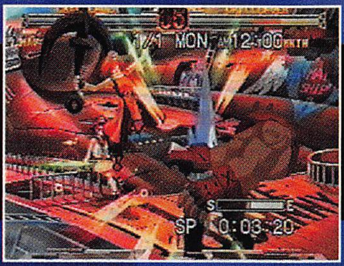
Gear turned out better than most 2D fighters on the 2D-retarded PlayStation. My only gripe about *GG* was the scrubby "Destroy" fatalities. Other than that I loved every aspect, from the anime-like animation to the hard rockin' soundtrack and superstar-inspired names like Chipp Zanuff and Ky Kiske, wacky... I remember asking Daisuke-san a couple of questions about the *Guilty Gear* storyline and, also, why he chose to name the characters like he did during a conversation at UCLA. While he did answer most of my questions, others remained unanswered. Why? Our sly Japanese game creator told me that he didn't want to spoil anything that we might see in the sequel. One such question was why Baiken lost her arm and who was the man she was linked to.

This summer I'll get a chance to find out what I couldn't two years ago and Team Neo Blood gets a shot at creating a *Guilty Gear* that even they can be happy with. Sega's NAOMI board has answered a lot of prayers. Here's hoping that the second chapter in the *Guilty Gear* series is one of those prayers.













We've already seen NAOMI do some serious math with *Power Stone* and we even caught a glimpse of its 2D power with *MVC2* (see this month's import section). But *Guilty Gear X* is a really ambitious effort at pushing the 2D powerhouse to the max. Tons of RAM and supercomputer-like processing power make for practically limitless boundaries when it comes to Team Neo's game concept. Look at these arcade shots and marvel at the beauty. *MVC2* may hold the title in 2D/3D hybridization, but *Guilty Gear X* may take the crown when it comes to traditional 2D craziness. It's a shame you can't see these pictures move because even a picture's thousand words doesn't match the game in motion, not by a long shot. A silky smooth 60 frames per second and smoother animation coupled with cleaner backgrounds and psuedo-3D effects will impress you, I guarantee that.

No word on which arcade manufacturer has picked this one up or if anyone is considering it at all. As of press time, *Guilty Gear X* is testing in various locations in Japan. Another big "I don't know" is whether or not *Guilty Gear X* will make the seemingly effortless journey over to Dreamcast. In my opinion it's a no-brainer, if *Marvel vs. Capcom 2* can, why can't *Guilty Gear X*? Keep those combo dialing fingers crossed that someone with some foresight grabs this one and fast. Anyone in the publishing world listening? Get on those phones and call Sammy or the Japanese Embassy, I don't care—just get us this game!

There's more of everything in this sequel and I hope for our sake that it does make it over to the US. It'd be a cryin' shame if we got assed out of this one. If it's released for the Japanese Dreamcast we could always import it, but what fun is that? C

TREMOR ENTERTAINMENT





9.9 on the Richter scale

WinCE: I hate it, you hate it, everyone hates it—except PC developers, of course (sissy middleware users, bah!). This wonderful 'operating system' has given birth to such classics as *Incoming* and a nicely crippled version of *Sega Rally 2* ("I have some tough news, folks... he'll never run at 60 fps again"). But what if we could take a trip to another time, another place... one in which WinCE isn't just a crutch for unskilled programmers and crybabies that can't hack it in Assembler... one in which WinCE makes the Dreamcast hardware shine like the brightest star in the console firmament. It's a magical place, a land you might call Burbank...




Nestled away in this magical fairy-land is a diligent group of coders who eschew the common belief that the only way to get the most out of Sega's powerhouse is by going 'to the metal.' It's a group of magicians who truly believe that WinCE isn't just the answer, but the highest power in DC development. And it's a group of code warriors who've not only conquered the Dragon, but tamed it as well... Welcome to the world of Tremor Entertainment.

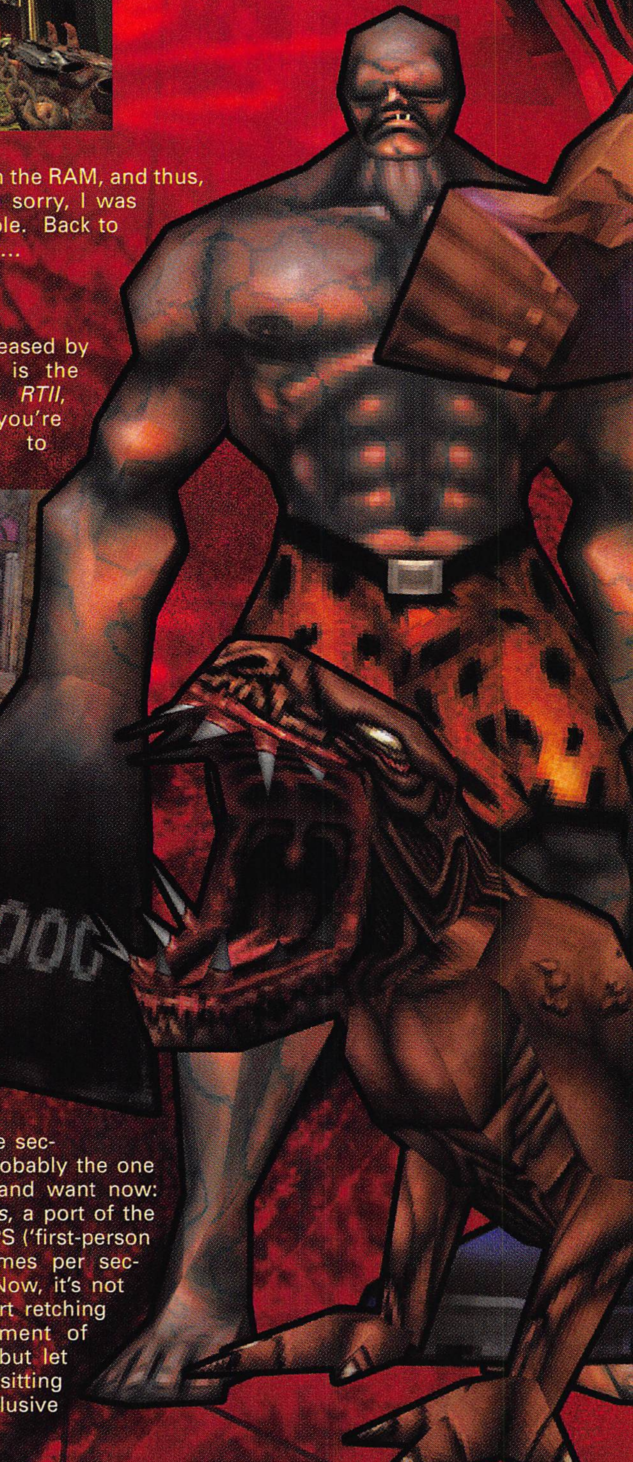
SoCal's Best-Kept Secret?

One of the best-kept secrets in the world of console gaming is Southern California's own Tremor Entertainment. This blazing start-up was founded by a rogue group of PC coders that were weary of working for 'the man' (though not for long, wink, wink, nudge, nudge). Tremor not only managed to successfully port the PC hit *Railroad Tycoon II* to PlayStation (no mean feat, given the bloated, Dom Deluise-like state of most PC engines—can you say 'LithTech?'), but also crafted a million polygon-per-second engine on the DC just to run the same (albeit tremendously enhanced) game.

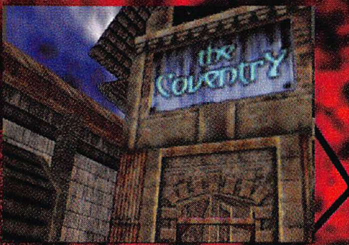
And how did Tremor do it? Again, it succeeded by harnessing the raw force that is apparently locked in every single DC dev kit—and with Dragon, nonetheless. Here's a brief primer in DC development: Dragon is the handy little WinCE toolkit that helps developers accomplish all the 'magic' others might tackle with the Sega-supplied OS (or, for the really brave, by coding their own tools). This practical beast is currently on revision 2.0, and is apparently being under-utilized by **every** other development house in existence. As a result, Tremor's titles are **so** far beyond other WinCE products that it's almost unfair. Here's another nice little tidbit about Dragon: If a company develops a game with it, it'll run on PC instantly. That sounds like a nice incentive for PC developers, to **start** on Dragon and then to transfer the project to PC, where it'll make a much smaller footprint in the RAM, and thus, its speed—oh, I'm sorry, I was beginning to ramble. Back to the matter at hand...

Give Me a Kiss, Mr. Engineer

The first title released by this powerhouse is the aforementioned *RTII*, which I'm sure you're anxious enough to have a go at. The second, though, is probably the one you really want, and want now: *Kiss Psycho Circus*, a port of the forthcoming PC FPS ('first-person shooter,' not 'frames per second,' newbies). Now, it's not uncommon to start retching at the announcement of another PC port, but let me say that after sitting down for an exclusive











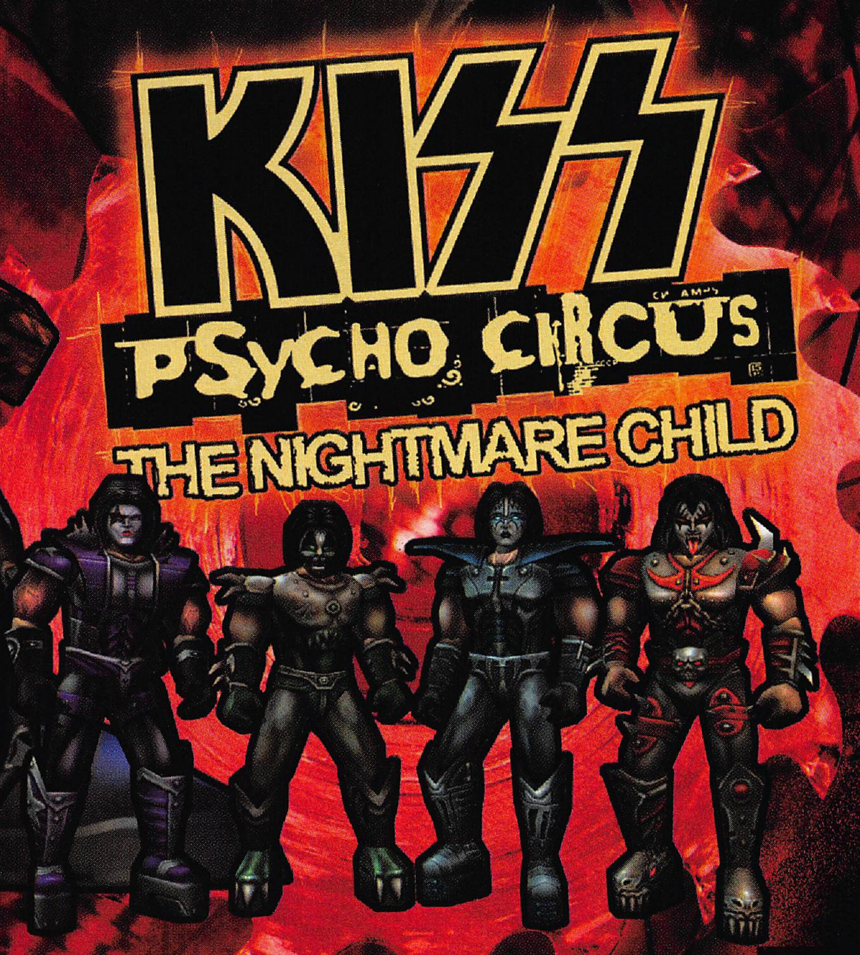
little playtest of this impending DC deathfest, I was a little bit more than taken aback.

First and foremost: The initial target frame-rate for *KPC* was 30 fps. Ultimately, however, the fine lads at Tremor felt that that goal just wasn't quite good enough. No, they just had to tweak, prod, coerce and push Dragon 2.0 to give them exactly what they—indeed, what we **all**—want to see: a near-constant 60 fps! Tremor reportedly had their doubts about porting the beast known as LithTech (the engine behind such PC titles as *Shogo: MAD* and *Kiss*), but in the end, managed to come through and deliver a stunningly playable frame-rate. If the early rev we were privy to is any indication, we're in for the PC port to end all PC ports <fingers crossed>...

As for *Railroad Tycoon II*, well, how do one million polys per second at a roughly solid 30-fps clip sound to you? Pretty good, I'd say, particularly now that the entire game (minus trees) is presented in full 3D. Unlike the PC and PS revs, the DC version will boast fully polygonal environments, buildings **and** trains; this will allow players to view everything, from any angle, as well as zoom far out to take in the full surroundings. It may be 'just a resource management sim' (am I the only person who plays *Warcraft II* like it was *Sim City*?), but it's got to be the king of resource management games.

Psssst...Hey You, Come Here

These two games are just the start for the infant developer; look for an announcement of seismic proportions at E3. I, for one, can't wait to hear more about *Substance*, the second coming of *Herzog Zwei* (oh yes, I can see it now...<shudder>). Suffice it to say that things are looking bright... even for a company that uses WinCE exclusively. **ECM**





Chances are you know what an "otaku" is... you just didn't know it. These pimply-faced pariahs commonly dress in clothes that don't fit, coupled with taped glasses, a pocket protector and a backpack. Their frail hands tremble, as do their high-pitched voices when they speak, and their glistening foreheads shine like a lighthouse beacon in the night. In Japan, they're known as "otaku;" in the U.S., we call them Shidoshi—I mean, "sausages" (actually, there's a strong correlation between anime freaks—er, fans and otaku).



otaku no game
オタクノゲーム
identity crisis













Upstart developer Fat Tuna is currently working on a game starring an otaku, and the working title is *Otaku no Game—Identity Crisis* (name subject to change; unfortunately, *Sausage Crisis* kept conjuring up the wrong image). And with such a ripe subject as otaku for the picking (on), you can expect lots of jokes, self-deprecating humor and a main character whose nose bleeds whenever he gets 'excited.'

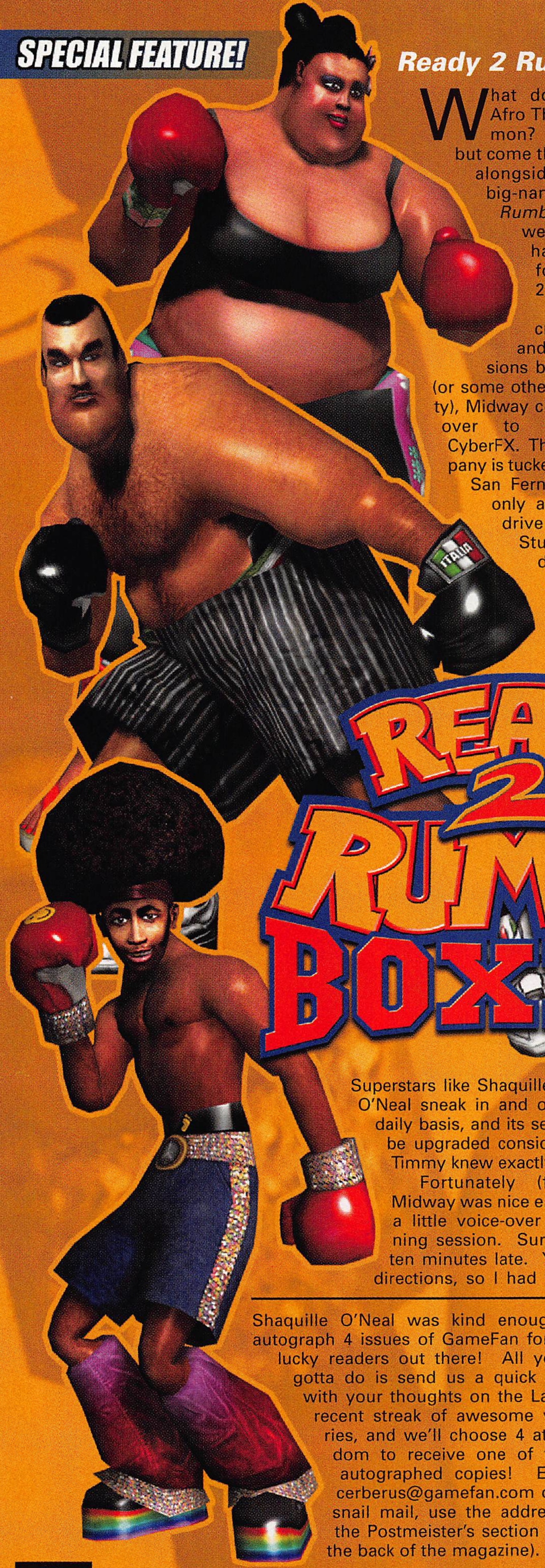
The story recounts the adventures of a run-of-the-mill college kid named Eddy, who's transformed into a 'super otaku' in an experiment gone awry, and, sporting some ultra-cool Ultraman duds, sets out to battle a bunch of terrorists intent on bringing down the hi-tech industry. "What?! They want to pull the plug on *EverQuest*? They're already dead." The game will be an action/RPG with one helluva twist—and this is just the first PS game developed by Fat Tuna, whose previous efforts have all been on the platform that spawned that infernal Pikachu (i.e., the Game Boy)!

Otaku no Game has been in development since last September, and boasts a lead designer (Han Lee) that used to work for Square. Do I have your attention yet? The game should be complete sometime this summer, hopefully by June. Fat Tuna doesn't have a publisher yet, but with such a novel game idea and a carefree, refreshing attitude toward making games, it's only a matter of time before a notable publisher signs on for *Otaku no Game*. Would you like to know more? Take a good look at the flopping Fat Tuna company's website, at www.fattuna.com. **Eggo**




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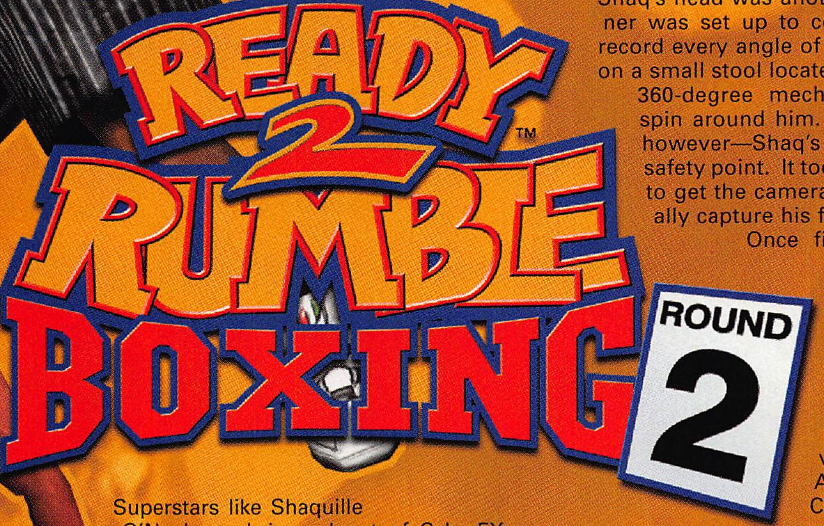
SPECIAL FEATURE!



Ready 2 Rumble 2: The Shaq Attack?

What do "the Shaq" and Afro Thunder have in common? Nothing as of yet, but come this fall, Afro will star alongside Shaq and other big-name celebs in *Ready 2 Rumble 2*—and if all goes well, Midway hopes to have the game ready for the PlayStation 2's U.S. launch.

Now, instead of recreating Shaq's mug and picturesque dimensions by hand in 3D Studio (or some other overpriced 3D utility), Midway chose to hand the job over to the professionals: CyberFX. This visual effects company is tucked quietly away in the San Fernando valley, but it's only a couple of minutes' drive from Buena Vista Studios, in a nondescript office building that keeps any unwanted visitors from stumbling in. And who can blame it?



Superstars like Shaquille O'Neal sneak in and out of CyberFX on a daily basis, and its security would have to be upgraded considerably if every Little Timmy knew exactly where it was.

Fortunately (for me, anyway), Midway was nice enough to let me in on a little voice-over and full-body scanning session. Surprisingly, I was only ten minutes late. Yahoo! gave me bad directions, so I had to pull out my 1989 Thomas Guide and plot my own course (note to self: Never, ever use Yahoo! Maps again).

By the time I arrived, Shaq had just pulled up in his slammed Lincoln Navigator... Believe me, this puppy's loaded with a serious sound system and a custom-made Superman logo right in the center of the grill. As if that wasn't enough, the V-8 monster's decked out with a hydraulic lift mechanism. But I digress...

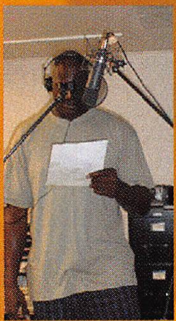
Before the actual body sculpting began, Midway took advantage of the day and, in a makeshift sound studio, recorded Shaq's in-game dialogue onto DAT. Words really can't describe how "colorful" Shaq can be in front of the mic... The voice-overs were done in no time, though, and with those out of the way, it was time to photograph the giant's colossal physique. Extra care was taken to photograph every tattoo.

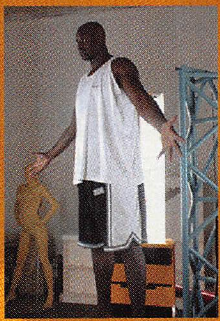
Finally, the sound was a "go," the textures were a "go," and it was time to take Shaquille into the world of 3D. Now, normally, the CNC sculpting process only takes a couple of seconds. This wasn't what I would call an ordinary sitting, however... Digitally capturing number 34's body was anything but 'ordinary.' Four digital cameras rigged perpendicular to each other descended from the ceiling, transferring the acquired information to a nearby SGI Indigo. After just a couple of passes, the body imaging was set.

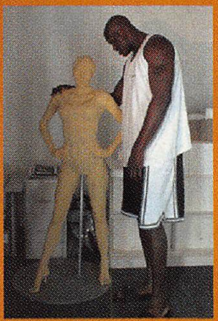
That was the easy part, though. Scanning Shaq's head was another story. The head scanner was set up to complete one rotation and record every angle of his face and head. He sat on a small stool located on a small step, and the 360-degree mechanism was supposed to spin around him. There was one problem, however—Shaq's legs extended beyond the safety point. It took longer to figure out how to get the camera around him than to actually capture his features.

Once finished, the session with Shaq pretty much came to an end. Midway's remaining tight-lipped about the rest of its all-star *R2R2* lineup... I can only guess who the game's other characters might be, but I did see 3D versions of Jim Carrey and Arnold Schwarzenegger at CyberFX. Wouldn't that be cool? Jim versus Arnold... Then, how about a brawl between Shaq and Kerri Hoskins (of "Mortal Kombat" fame, a.k.a. Sonya)? No matter what happens, though, *R2R2* will be a 'must have.' I know I'll be waiting. If you want more information on CNC body sculpting, check out www.cyberfx3d.com. If you want more info on *R2R2*, keep your eyes on these pages—we'll be back quite soon for Round Two. **Cerberus**

Shaquille O'Neal was kind enough to autograph 4 issues of GameFan for you lucky readers out there! All you've gotta do is send us a quick letter with your thoughts on the Lakers' recent streak of awesome victories, and we'll choose 4 at random to receive one of these autographed copies! E-mail cerberus@gamefan.com or for snail mail, use the address in the Postmeister's section (near the back of the magazine).









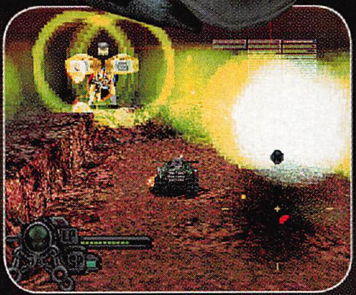
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GAME BOY COLOR
SLITHERINE SOFTWARE
EIDOS INTERACTIVE

BLASTER MASTER BLASTING AGAIN





I still haven't figured out why games meant so much more to me ten or fifteen years ago... Was I really that young and impressionable, or could it have been that I wasn't such a hypercritical, jaded gamer/critic guy? Maybe I just had nothing better to do at the time... Or could it be that games were simply better before the bits went into double digits? Whatever the reason might have been, I could easily rattle off a list of a hundred games that I'd love to see remade in '90s—er, '00s fashion. Luckily for me, though, Sunsoft's answered my prayers, and that list just shrunk by one.





Saying that the Japanese publisher's been out of the loop for a couple of years would be the understatement of the month, but who can criticize Sunsoft? I have very fond memories of *Platoon* and, yes, *Blaster Master.* I chose to forget about *Blaster Master 2,* 'cause it didn't capture the spirit of the first. *Blaster Master: Blasting Again,* on the other hand, has remained very faithful to the NES classic thus far. The environments and everything held within may have gone 3D, but the game is still as fun as it ever was. Sadly, Jason is gone; in his stead are his children Roddy and Ellfie, in Jason's original battle-worn vehicle. Of course, Sofia's undergone some serious upgrades, too. At times, the tank handles better than a Ferrari. It also has more ammo than Saddam Hussein.





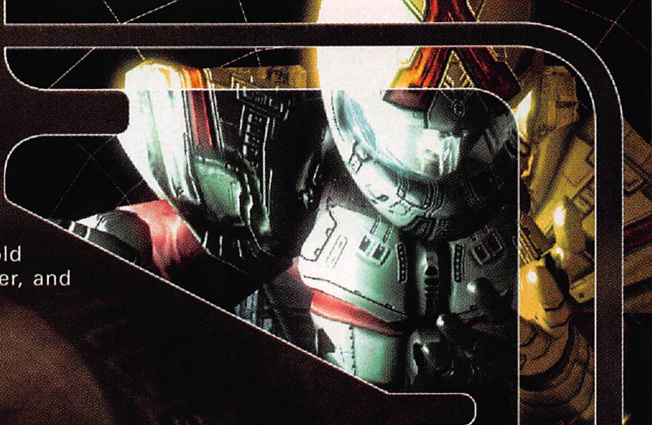
Blasting Again takes place in 2019. Like their father before them, Roddy and Ellfie venture into the inner layers of the Earth's crust. Here, they'll finish what their dad couldn't. It's not much of a story line, but I (or any other *Blaster* fans, for that matter) wouldn't want it any other way. Exploration's ever so important in this game, and the new radar/map feature makes it a little easier to find the way through the massive underground caverns.

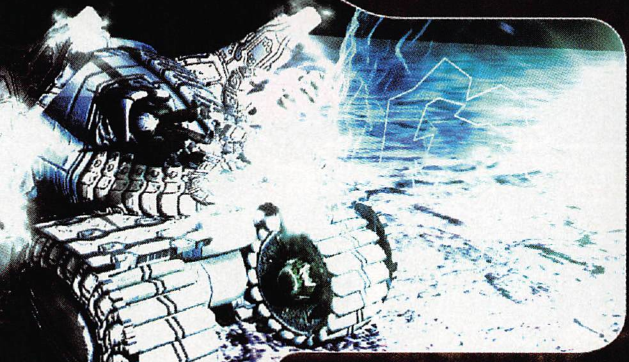


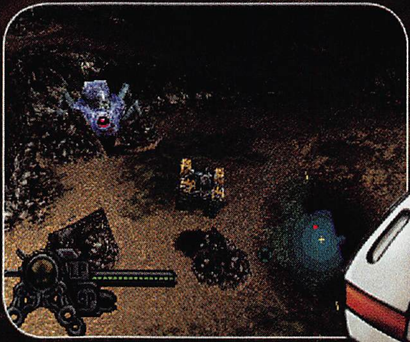
F FEATURE			
	CERBERUS: THIS COULD ACTUALLY MAKE UP FOR BLASTER MASTER 2...	DEVELOPER - SUNSOFT PUBLISHER - SUNSOFT	1 PLAYER AVAILABLE FALL

Don't be too shocked to see old NES enemies or locales in polygonal form… Who knows—if we're really lucky, maybe the larger-than-life plutonium boss will make an appearance. Sofia doesn't look bad at all in her new polygonal state, either: her shoulder-mounted weapons morph on the fly as they're selected, so you'll see her outward appearance change each time Roddy switches firearms. Other attributes can be acquired later.

Our exclusive preview build is a really early one, so *Blasting Again* could go either way—good or bad. But from what I've seen, I don't have anything to whine or rant about. If Sunsoft can recreate even 10% of that old *Blaster Master* magic, I'll be a happy camper. E3's right around the corner, and more will be shown there, so watch these pages for a feature update. **C**

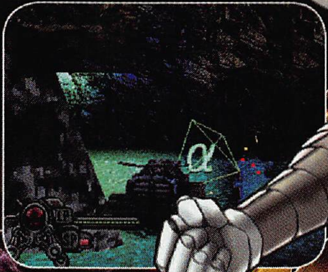


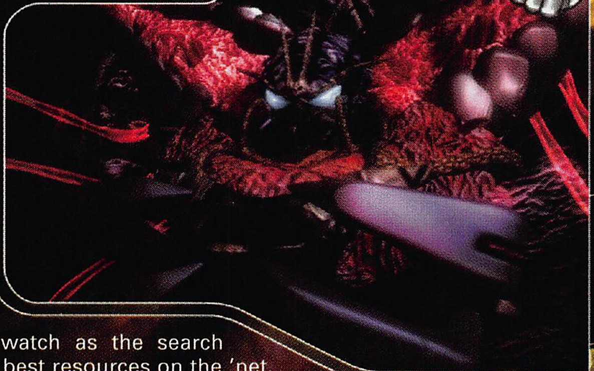












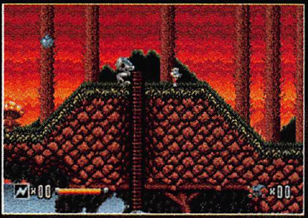


Tid-bits

Blaster Master isn't dead, at least not in the hearts of *Blaster* fans everywhere—not by a long shot. The Internet's positive proof of this, but don't type in Blastermaster.com—it'll bring up some German blasting company. What you need to do is head over to Yahoo, type in "Blaster Master" and watch as the search engine leads you to some of the best resources on the 'net. One fan in particular has more information than even Sunsoft's released to the press. Did you know that *Blaster Master* was called *MetaFight* in Japan? Betcha didn't. Another neat-o tidbit is that *Blaster Master* on the GameBoy wasn't really part of the series—it was originally part of the *BomberMan* series. The graphics and name were changed, though, and voila, *Blaster Master* GB was born.

There's still a lot of demand for *Blaster Master,* though, and I'm not sure if a single PlayStation game's going to cover it… Players are still so in love with Jason and Sofia that many have come up with their own design docs and gone so far as to sketch, draw, paint and render the amphibious tank. Think you're a real *Blaster Master?* You owe it to yourself to quit playing *EverQuest* (or *Unreal Tournament,* if you're Reubus) and do a quick search for one of the great old 8-bit games… You'll be glad you did.





ストライダー飛竜 1&2
STRIDER HIRYU

STRIDER 2

PlayStation

Reviews



Previews







Grapefruit? Sweet as the Ripest Orange, By Comparison...

By the time you read this, *Strider 2* will be a smoking ruin in the Land of the Rising Sun. The game did modest business in Japanese arcades (we didn't even get an arcade release <grumble>), but it sold a paltry 15,000 or so units in its first week of retail sales—and I'm going to assume that about a third of those sales were made abroad, due to an increasingly hospitable import market... thank you, Internet, for a change). This is very important to note because, as with *Gunbird 2* on Dreamcast (reviewed elsewhere this issue), pure games—gamers' games—are suffering a hellish fate in a land that conventional wisdom tells us always acknowledges greatness.

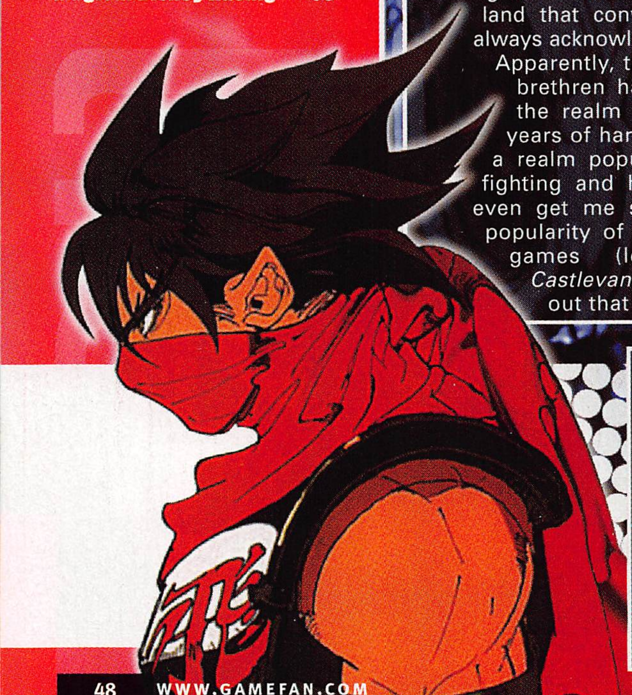
Apparently, though, even our Japanese brethren have taken the plunge into the realm of the casual, casting off years of hard-core play and moving to a realm populated only by racing, 3D fighting and horse racing sims. Don't even get me started on the continuing popularity of Konami's infernal *BeMani* games (let's see, cancel DC *Castlevania,* but continue to churn out that crud... that's justice).

But just because I'm bitter at its less-than-welcome reception from a group of gamers more keen to play *Bust-A-Mania VII: Breakin' 2K* than a quality game like *Strider 2* doesn't mean it has to be so in America—the land of the free, and the home of the last bastion of **true** gamers...

A Pinch Here, A Tuck There

When *Strider 2* made its less-than-auspicious debut at last year's E3 (a few more surly show-goers were organizing a full torch-and-pitchfork session to show Capcom just how displeased they were with the state of the game—apparently, that's what ya get for showing your hand too soon), many were quick to note its painful visuals, courtesy of your friend and mine, PlayStation. Every other arcade game Capcom was tinkering away on featured super-hot NAOMI gear, but this lone eyesore only hindered the reputation of a game many thought had completely betrayed its predecessor.

Still, let it not be said that an additional eight months in development hasn't helped matters immensely... It's as if *Strider 2* went away to one of those fat farms, and shed about 300 pounds of unwanted flab, all the while becoming leaner and meaner. Kid Fan could use the number of that spa, let me tell ya...







Now, it's a matter of night and day. I won't go so far as to say that the character sprites in the game animate as smooth as the latest 2D Capcom fighter, but I will say that it's certainly better than 95% of the PlayStation games out there. The colors are vibrant and solid, with no dithering issues (on the sprites, that is—the backgrounds are another story), and the burning transparencies everywhere will actually make you thank your lucky stars (for once) that Saturn wasn't around to see this day.

The backgrounds are nice, and they certainly look **much** better than they did at E3. They're nothing to really write home about, mind you; they get the job done, but they have the unfortunate effect of begging the question: "Why not NAOMI?!?" Still, it's certainly one of the best-looking PS games in quite some time, and you certainly won't hear me moanin' (too much) about the graphics.

Wet Wear, Capcom-Style

Many a gamer had good reason to question the sanity of Ken Kutaragi (father of the PlayStation and its not-quite-mature sibling) when he recently stated that gamers would be playing their PS2s "Matrix"-style in the very near future (ah, how the hyperbole and rhetoric flows on the eve of a system launch <guffaw>), but it seems that Capcom already has the hotline on jacking game control directly into your ADS-afflicted brain. See, there are very few PlayStation games—scratch that... games period—that control and play as well as *Strider 2*.

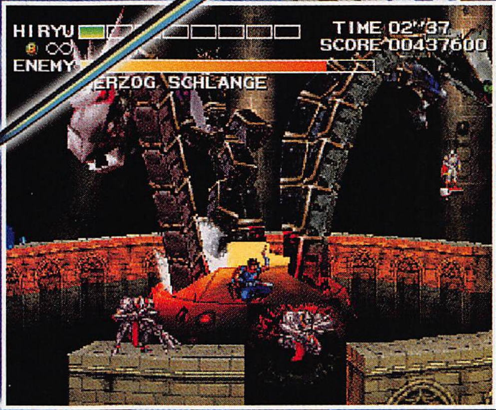
It's obvious that Capcom knows how to create a hot little package, but what's most stunning is just how well everything in *Strider 2* 'feels.' You'll be careening through level after powerfully designed level, executing flips, double-jumps, sword strikes, and generally wreaking havoc on a lunatic legion of goons, guardsmen and garrulous arctic fauna (oh yes, look out for the evil penguins and a slightly agitated robo-mammoth)—all of it nearly without effort. Even Fury looked good playing this game, and he's a guy that usually has trouble spelling his name and tying his shoes.

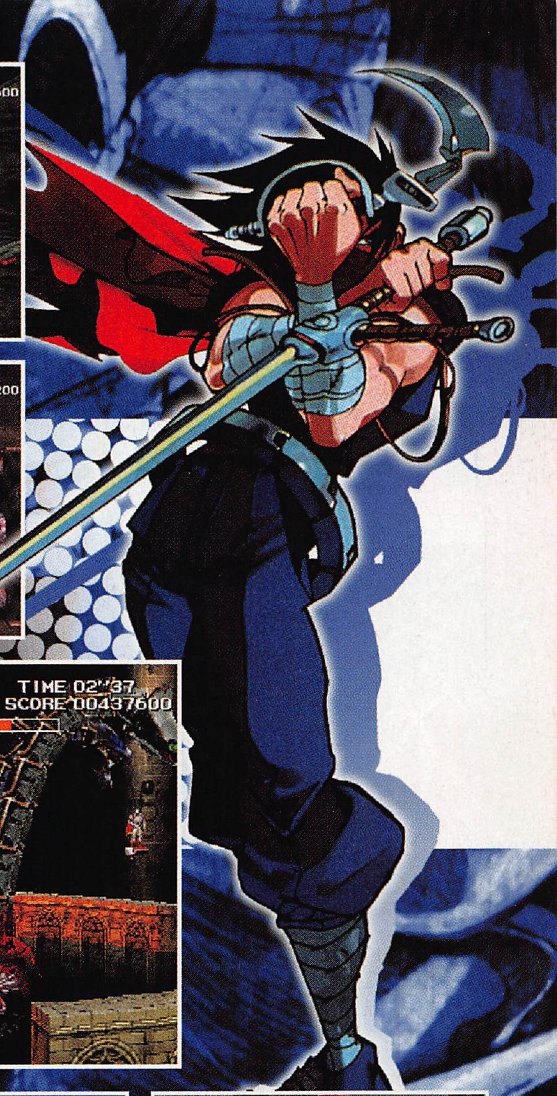
Gamers Wanted

Thanks to far too many last-minute PS2 games (oh, boy, more *Tekken*... I'll try to contain my excitement <blech>), I've had to pare down this review to let the latecomers get their time in the sun. Suffice it to say, however, that if you don't buy this game, well, you're not a gamer, nor do you probably have a pulse (*Strider 2* is enough to correct that shortcoming, however). I don't generally end reviews with blunt generalizations, but this time, I feel compelled... If there's one PlayStation game you must buy this year, it's *Strider 2*. **ECM**











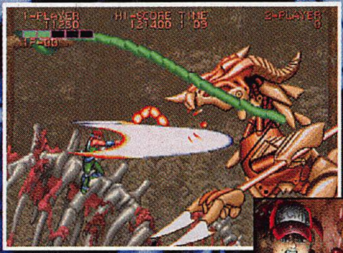


STRIDER



"8 Mega Power!" You remember the old Sega ad: "Genesis Does What Nintendon't!" Well, now you can relive all those memories again with *Strider 1*, handily bundled with the all-new *Strider 2*. Amazingly, the game holds up incredibly well and actually runs *faster* than the original—how's that for a nice little bonus. Capcom does love you!

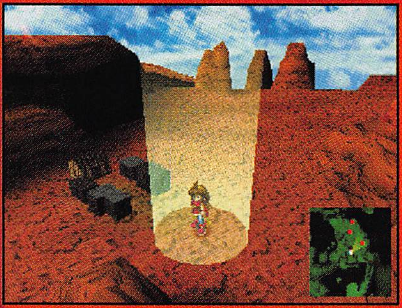




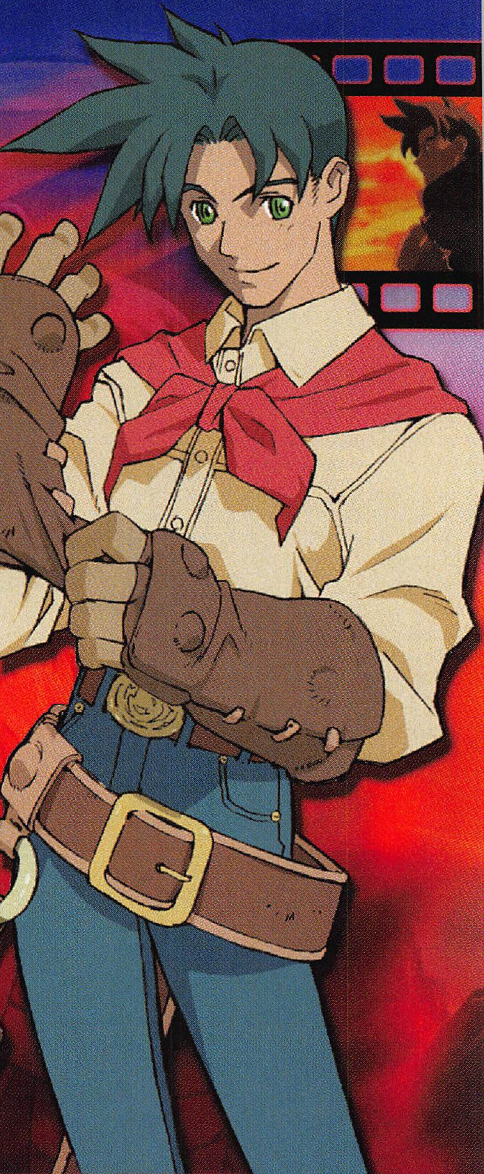
Viewpoint Score :96	Developer - Capcom	1 Player	ECM: Ain't nothin' gonna
	Publisher - Capcom	Available May	break-a my stride...

R Review

WILD ARMS 2nd® IGNITION





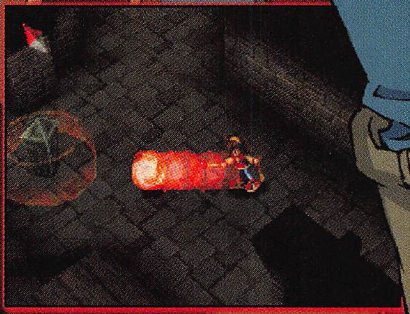


The PlayStation didn't used to be the "RPG leader" that it is today (so says Sony, "Let all cower in fear before the might of our stories!"), but early RPGs like *Suikoden* and *Wild Arms* fast contributed to that reputation... Now, after briefly dabbling with the non-legendary *Legaia*, Contrail's back with a sequel to its popular *Wild Arms*—and with it, it brings back many of the features popular in the original: *Zelda*-like toys, clever puzzles and a spiffy animated intro.

At the start of *Wild Arms 2*, its three primary characters are separated, just like the original *Wild Arms*. Each character must complete his/her individual mini-quest. Only when they're finished will their paths intersect, and the main game will finally start.

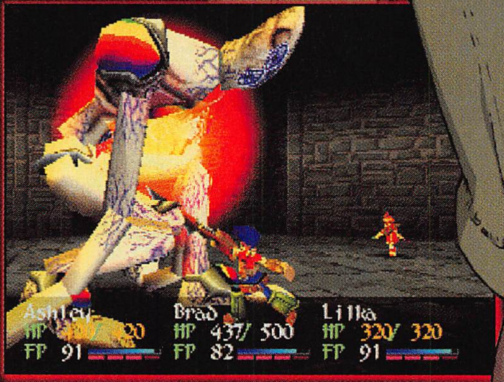
Whenever a game has action/RPG elements like bombs and a hook shot, it earns points with me... *WA2* doesn't have the hook shot anymore, but each character has three nifty toys that would make Link jealous, and ultimately, you'll need them all to solve the countless dungeon puzzles. For example: Brad Evans' boots can knock around crates (UPS-style), his bombs can blow holes in walls (d*mn those thin Filgaian walls), and his Earthquake (which is particularly fun for us Californians) can destroy items in a given radius around him.

There's nothing quite like a game chock full of challenging, yet not impossible, puzzles... and that's what *Wild Arms 2* is. It's got a healthy mixture of hidden items tucked away in 3D crevasses (requiring a rotating camera to spot) and simple brain-teasers; use your noodle (and the aforementioned action/RPG toys) to solve these. They're some of the best puzzles I've seen in a game in a long time. They're not mindless, like *Resident Evil's* "round piece go in round hole" puzzles (don't they use that to test the aptitude of bright three-year-olds?), and they're not impossible, like *Alundra 1*'s puzzles (spin three times and throw a cat over your shoulder when the moon's at its zenith to open this door). No, *Wild Arms 2*'s puzzles provide a solid foundation for gameplay.

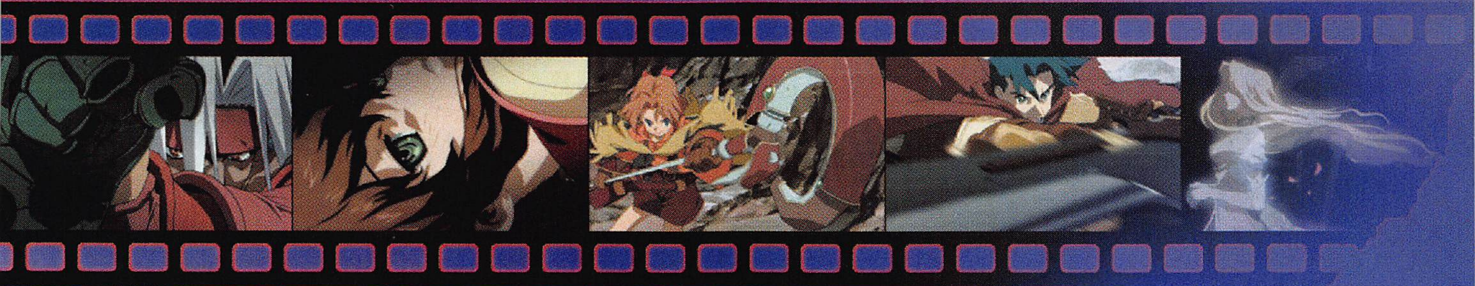








R REVIEW	EGGO: THOSE ARMS ARE JUST OUT OF CONTROL	DEVELOPER - CONTRAIL PUBLISHER - SCEA	1 PLAYER AVAILABLE NOW	VIEWPOINT SCORE :90





The other half of the RPG gameplay equation's found in battle, and this game's battles are well spaced out and occur with perfect frequency. In fact, if you're in a hurry and haven't got time for the pain, you can always opt for the Encounter Cancel System—which aborts any impending random encounters with just the touch of a button (similar to 'ducking' in *Shadow Madness'*... if only it would work in real life).

Like the original *Wild Arms*, *WA2*'s battles are 3D, and the characters have all grown up. They're now full-sized, like the crew in *Final Fantasy VIII*. "Begone, super-deformed husks of yesteryear... get thee to an older issue of *GameFan*!" Sniff. At least the characters remain sprites outside of battle, when scampering about towns and dungeons... By the way, none of the characters from the original *Wild Arms* return to this sequel, though the wasteland world of Filgaia remains the same. *WA2*'s combat isn't the most fun thing around, but luckily, it's not too frequent, and there's also an auto-battle option so you can wander away and clean house while it rages on.





Wild Arms 2's story details the formation and adventures of a crisis prevention team known as ARMS (Agile Remote Mission Squad). Its mission is to investigate and uncover a budding political conspiracy that could rock the world of Filgaia. If that sounds boring, then just imagine that they're a bunch of mercenaries for hire—like the A-Team, only without Mr. T. But instead of Face Man and Murdock, you've got team members like Ashley Winchester (Musketeer Second Class—an unexpected hero and all-around good guy), Lilka Eleniak (Crest Sorceress, Apprentice Level—a bumbling female magic user, skilled at stumbling upon the solution for every problem) and Brad Evans (convict no. 666—an everyday soldier hero framed for a crime he didn't commit... and no, he doesn't worship Satan, they just gave him that number, honest). It's not the most original cast of characters you've ever seen, but originality's never been a distinguishing characteristic of *Wild Arms*... Hey, at least it's fun.





The translation in this game varies from 'good' to 'blasé' to 'what were they thinking?' You'll encounter a number of anachronisms along the way, like the "Booty Call" item, which inevitably jars you back to reality—à la Working Designs' more wacky endeavors.

The music is one of the worst aspects of the game... It's not bad, mind you—just nondescript and forgettable. But then, *Wild Arms 2* isn't about just the music or just the clichéd characters. It's all about the total package: a fun-filled RPG adventure that's sure to tide RPG fans over till the heavy hitters (*Chrono Cross*, *Legend of Dragoon* and *Final Fantasy IX*) arrive later this year.

There have been times when Eggo wanted to throw a bomb at his apartment walls to shut his neighbors up.

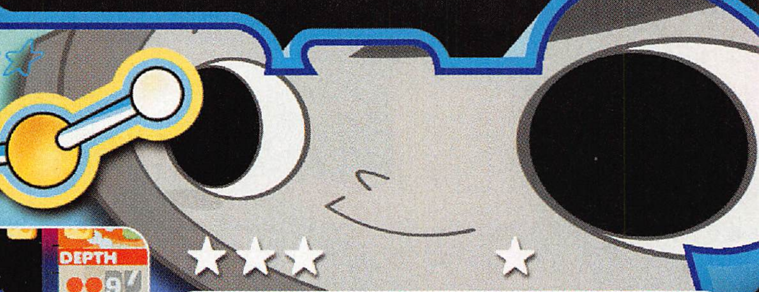


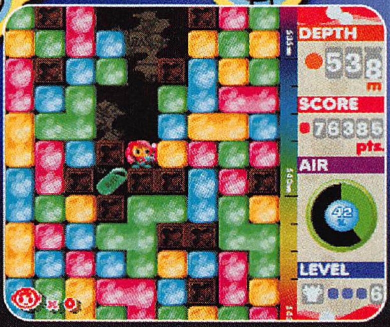




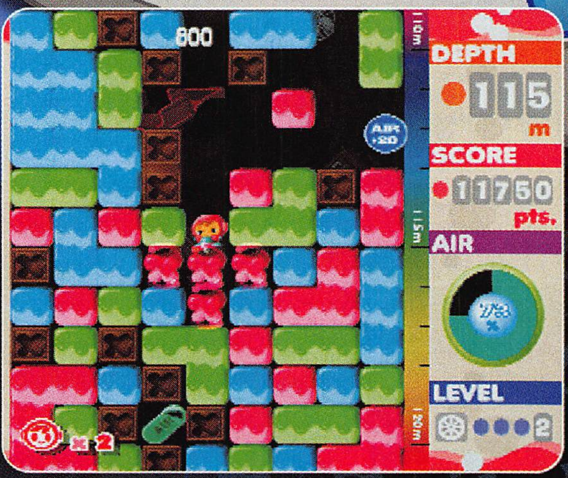
Pole Position, *Dig Dug* and *Mr. Do*—those games were Namco at its best. Forget about *Tekken, Ridge Racer* and *Ace Combat*... they're all wannabes. Before polygons, before anti-aliasing, even before parallax, Namco was busting out some of the coolest games I can remember—*Mappy,* anyone? I may not be as vocal as ECM or Fury about missing the golden age of gaming, but I miss it just as much. I've said it before, and I'll say it again: Games are different now, a lot different from the way they were ten years ago. Perhaps Namco takes the business of making video games too seriously, and perhaps players want their games to be as serious as the *Tekken*s and *Ace Combat*s of today, but either way, there's not enough of that lighthearted, "Let's make a game because it's fun" mentality anymore. It's just not as prevalent. But wait—*Mr. Driller* is here, and not only to save the day, but also to hark way back to the fast-paced, super-twitchy gameplay reminiscent of early '80s arcade games!

Mr. Driller bears an uncanny resemblance to baby Stewie of "The Family Guy" in a *Niu Niu* costume, and with your help, he'll work his way into the deepest depths of the Earth. Well, 1,000 meters down, anyway. Our hero can't jump, but he can drill a mean hole. The object of the game is to drill through different colored blocks to go deeper and deeper into the ground. Be careful, though—drilling a hole may cause other blocks to fall, and you've gotta make sure Mr. Driller isn't squashed by falling debris. Oh, and by the way, he'll need oxygen tanks to survive—naturally. Go too long without air, and he'll turn blue in the face.









Wait a little longer, and he'll suffocate. Finally (as if falling topsoil wasn't enough to deal with), brown-colored boxes require multiple drills *and* exhaust 20% of available oxygen.

Drilling into the Earth over and over again may sound kind of monotonous... well, honestly, it is, but the pace of the game gets so out of hand that you won't even notice. After three consecutive hours of play, I still wasn't finished with the drill. It's got a certain appeal that not many games have; indeed, it's super addictive.

Frankly, a lot of players will overlook *Mr. Driller* in arcades and in its PlayStation form. It's a shame, too... If anyone will appreciate the simple fun factor of this game, it'll be older gamers that grew up on healthy doses of Capcom, Konami, Namco and Atari. If solid 'old-school' gameplay won't sell you, though, maybe the twenty-dollar price tag will. It's got a lot more gameplay for the money than most titles out there...





Cerberus had to laugh when Fury's only comment concerning this game had to with evil dentists and cavities being filled.



R REVIEW	CERBERUS: No one can stop Mr. Domino—err, Driller	Developer - Namco Publisher - Namco	1 Player Available Now	Viewpoint Score: 93





VAGRANT STORY™











It's been a while... So long, in fact, that I'd almost forgotten what a great story line could do for a game that plays just as well. Sure, there have been plenty of stories out there that have been solid enough to retain interest, and just as many wonderful plots that have accompanied mediocre games... But when was the last time you came across a game with both awesome gameplay and a gripping story—a game that grabbed you by the collar, slammed you down and demanded, "Look here, Mister, you're not moving from this chair until this is over—got that?" Well, *Vagrant Story*'s just such a game.

By now, you must have gathered a few snippets of the story: Ashley Riot, secret agent of the Riskbreaker team, must uncover a conspiracy behind the murder of the Duke. That's essentially it... I won't bore you with the details. Instead, I'll describe how the story unfolds with unparalleled cinematic presentation. Now, calm down, jaded gamers, this isn't one of those 'Square's falling off the deep end and making movies instead of games again' rants. No, we're talking about a **game** instilled with a dark, foreboding cinematic atmosphere, dramatic, tension-soaked events and stylistically rotating cameras (<sigh>... "The Matrix" has forever ruined us). All the while, the story's conveyed through in-game graphics as opposed to FMV. *This* is what a cinematic game should be—like a movie, yet still a game <courtesy nod to *Silent Hill* for delving into this realm first>. Don't forget, the story in *Story*'s one of the best that Square's produced in the 32-bit era.

But its story is only half the equation—*Vagrant Story*'s gameplay reigns supreme too. There aren't many noteworthy sword-swinging action games (with an emphasis on action) on PS. You've got *Legacy of Kain: Blood Omen*, *Alundra* and *Castlevania: Symphony of the Night*. *Vagrant Story* is the latest to join that elite action/adventure-action/RPG club, with its skillful chain combo system, smart puzzles (you won't find any switch-flipping here) and constant stream of creatures to cut.

If you're not sold yet, perhaps this final analogy will do the trick... ECM likened Square's multiple development teams to the different arms of Disney's motion picture empire. You've got people working on 'kiddy stuff' like *Chocobo's Mysterious Dungeon*, similar to Disney Studios' animated, G-rated fare ("Fantasia 2000"). Then you've got the groups working on PG-13 material like *Final Fantasy VIII*, à la Touchstone Pictures ("Mission To Mars"). Finally, there's the no-holds-barred team that made *Final Fantasy Tactics* and *Vagrant Story*; this last group's comparable to Miramax ("The Yards"). If the *Tactics* team isn't enough reason to get you off your butt to buy this game, I don't know what is... How 'bout a 93?

Eggo wants you to risk breaking your bank account to buy this game.

Viewpoint Score	93	Developer - Squaresoft	1 Player	Eggo: What
		Publisher - Square/EA	Available Now	a Story!

R REVIEW

You guys remember *Speedball*, don't ya? If you played games a decade ago, chances are you not only remember it, you obsessed over it. A number of versions showed up on the Sega Genesis and Master System, the Atari ST and the Amiga. *Speedball* was one of the great arcade experiences of the early nineties, one of those games that gave me the absolute worst case of 'Sega Thumb.' I hadn't had calluses on my hands like those since I was fifteen...

It was also a game with a truly frenetic pace. You never had time to stop and think about what you were doing. Just get that ball forward and fire it at the goal, and if someone gets in your way, check him. It sounds simple—and it is. Part of *Speedball*'s beauty was that it was so completely one-dimensional. There was nothing to the game but pure gameplay. If you weren't an adept player, the game looked slow and clumsy. If you had the mad skills, though, the game blazed, and it got better as you got better—the true test of a hardcore game.

It's been a long, long time since we've had a *Speedball* game, but the wait may well have been worth it. The Bitmap Brothers are back in action, with an amped-up version of the title for the PlayStation. A bit late? Perhaps—but late is always preferable to never. Besides, we'll all probably be old and gray by the time *Rollerball* ever comes out, so *Speedball 2100*'s just what the doctor ordered.

Don't expect any radical changes to the formula that made the first game a classic. The players may be polygon-based, but *Speedball 2100* looks like its 2D ancestor, and The Bitmap Brothers insist that the final product will play just like the original. This feature may turn off today's 3D-obsessed gamers, but fans of the original should be thrilled. Finding the high-speed gameplay and tight control of the 16-bit "dinosaurs" on today's 32-bit machines is harder than spotting a set of perfect teeth at Kodomo's family reunion...

I must admit that the early version's graphics make me cringe a little. The game's extremely basic, so some visual flair shouldn't be too tough to include (The Bitmaps hope to have full vertex lighting in the final). Aside from that, though, expect highly customizable teams, which will give *Speedball 2100* the depth the original lacked. Still, when you think 4th-generation PlayStation, you definitely don't envision this title. Remember, though, that *Speedball*'s about pure gameplay, and nothing more. I, for one, am stoked to play a game that doesn't need to hide its shortcomings under the fine sheen of frivolous extras and licenses. J









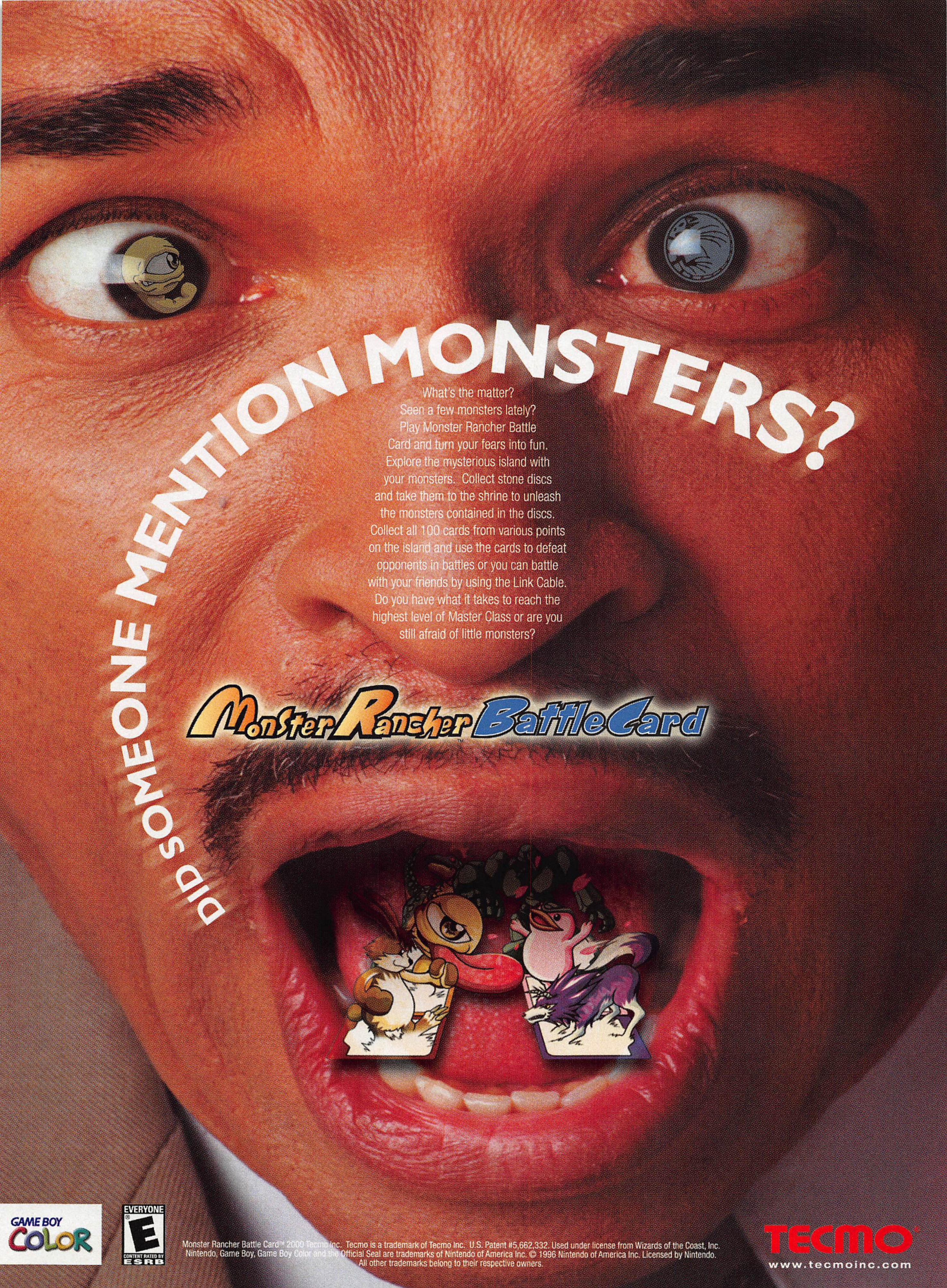


Get ready for SPEEDBALL 2100!





PREVIEW		
JUDGE: My second favorite type of Speedball.	Developer - Bitmap Bros.	1-2 Players
	Publisher - Empire	Available Summer



DID SOMEONE MENTION MONSTERS?
What's the matter? Seen a few monsters lately? Play Monster Rancher Battle Card and turn your fears into fun. Explore the mysterious island with your monsters. Collect stone discs and take them to the shrine to unleash the monsters contained in the discs. Collect all 100 cards from various points on the island and use the cards to defeat opponents in battles or you can battle with your friends by using the Link Cable. Do you have what it takes to reach the highest level of Master Class or are you still afraid of little monsters?
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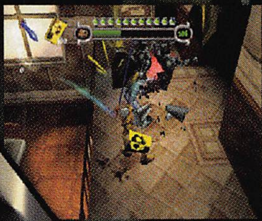
Sir Dan's back from the grave to stop the evil forces bent on destroying London. Ack! Why couldn't those dastardly villains have picked Paris, or at least Lyon? Who ever said life is fair...?

The sequel to *MediEvil* had some pretty big shoes to fill, but it's done a marvelous job. It remains true to everything that made the first game one of the best of '98, yet it's added enough new features to keep the gameplay fresh. *MediEvil 2* falls right in step behind its predecessor, and has solidified *MediEvil* as a potential franchise along the same lines as *Crash Bandicoot*.

The fundamentals of gameplay have not changed one iota in this sequel. It's a third-person adventure game, and it still relies heavily on level exploration and hackin' and slashin'. Mr. Fortesque (or Sir Dan, to his friends) now has "hot keyed" inventory slots that he can toggle while fighting, as well as a larger inventory library accessible with the 'Select' button. Many of the items available to him will be familiar to those who played the first game. There's a variety of edged and blunt weapons to use, as well as crossbows, guns and, of course, Sir Dan's own limbs.

The puzzle element remains a prominent aspect of level completion, but isn't nearly as tedious as those of the notorious *Tomb Raider*. Alas, you will have to push a few boxes and flip some switches here and there, but don't forget to collect those chalices either...





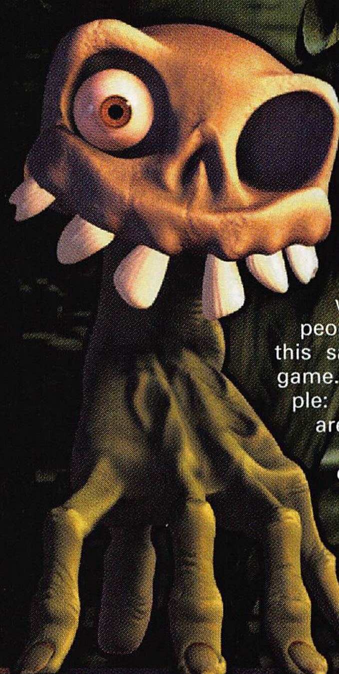
As you delve deeper into *MediEvil 2*, you'll discover some of the highlights and clever additions to the game. The two best examples have got to be the 'Headless Dan' mode and the 'Frankenstein's Monster' scene. As I mentioned in the preview, 'Headless Dan' jams his head onto a hyperactive, disembodied hand, and gives you access to a mobile first-person cam. Cruising around in this mode's not only entertaining, but it also adds new strategy elements to the game.

The aforementioned Frankenstein level's a perfect example of this game's creativity and playful demeanor. Don't worry, you'll get the chance to box the stitched-up brute, but first, you'll have to assemble all his random body parts. This kind of mirthful addition is seldom seen outside of a Nintendo game, but it embodies what *MediEvil 2*'s world is all about.





MediEvil II





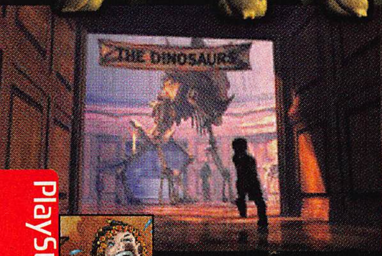




Is there a downside to this game? Just one: the camera. The camera angle can still pose problems at some level junctures, but it barely hinders its playability. I wouldn't have mentioned it at all if it wasn't for the fact that many people were quite annoyed with this same aspect in the original game. I'm telling you, though, people: *MediEvil 2*'s camera angles are still better!

MediEvil 2's a rock-solid purchase. It sports great gameplay, graphics and sound, and is a definite 'must have.' I can't wait to see how sweet it looks when it's fired up on the PS2... reverse compatibility's a wonderful thing. Now about this as a franchise...

The Judge likes to get medieval on Shidoshi every time he drinks too much.











R REVIEW	JUDGE: Sir Dan looks like Shidoshi with no skin...	Developer - SCEA Publisher - SCEE	1 Player Available Now	Viewpoint Score :95

Spiderman fans, your day draws near... New York's famed man-arachnid's ready to crawl onto the PlayStation, and Neversoft (no introduction necessary) is working 'round the clock on Activision's 3D platforming action game of the same name. Now, excluding some Capcom fighters, Peter Parker's never had what I would call a great game. Activision's sparing no expense, however, to make *this* game the real deal and remedy the long-running problem. Things are looking up—way up—for Spidey. This will be *the* "Spiderman" game.

Usually, we editor types are supposed to be rather objective in previews, but I'm going to make an exception this one time and throw that convention out the window. *Spiderman* rocks! Every major spider ability seen in the TV shows and comics is available in this game. The Big Apple's skyscrapers and office buildings make the perfect venue for Spidey, and a nearly limitless supply of web fluid gives Stan Lee's hero access to every ledge and surface in it. When he's not clinging to walls like a bug—er, arachnid—to avoid enemies, Spiderman beats back Kingpin's minions with Web Balls and Web Lassos, among other things...

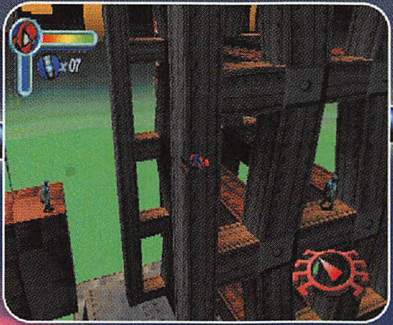
Mano a mano, Spidey's superhuman punches and kicks will link to one another for combos, much like *Final Fight*, *Streets of Rage* or any other brawlfest. But as anyone that reads the comic knows, it isn't just about beating up the bad guys. Sometimes, Spidey'll have to save a hostage before webbing a nearby enemy silly. Rescuing captives and dispensing bad guys will occasionally take a back seat to *Apocalypse*/*One*-style stages in which Spidey must run, jump and swing to avoid New York's SWAT team.

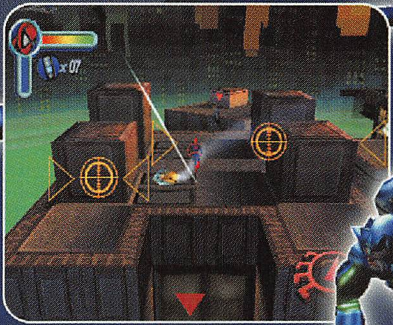
It sounds like the gameplay'll kick arse, doesn't it? Does it ever... O.K., Neversoft's got the gameplay right thus far—but has the developer captured the look and feel of the comic, cartoon and live-action series?

Well, from what I've seen, it couldn't be any more "right." The color palette pops like a well-painted celluloid. Spiderman's been modeled quite well, but what sets the mood better than the web-crawler himself are the backdrops. Just wait until you swing onto the secluded Four Freedoms Plaza. Spidey's best friends and worst enemies also make some cameos. I can't mention any names, but I have the feeling that a certain psychotic, symbiotic, suited reporter will stop by. As far as stages are concerned, some of the most famous *Spiderman* issues will serve as the foundation for each of the game's eight, and each one will contain a minimum of four scenes.

I know that my enthusiasm for *Spiderman* may be somewhat premature... so shoot me. I love great games, and if Activision and Neversoft keep up the good work, *Spiderman* could be another trophy on the mantel. The only thing I can complain about is that there aren't enough levels to play right now. In a couple of months or so, we'll have a finished version to review; some *Marvel vs. Capcom* should tide me over until then. My spider senses are tingling... **C**













Developer - Neversoft	1 Player	CERBERUS: Spiderman, Spiderman,
Publisher - Activision	Available Late Summer	friendly neighborhood Spiderman...

P PREVIEW

PlayStation







We all know how difficult it is to inject originality into a stale genre (a condition known commonly as racing game-itis). Like car combat games, kart racers tend to fall victim to this unfortunate plight with each subsequent release. It's definitely a slippery slope developers face. They often fail to inject any sort of originality or flair in their titles, and they just fall short in comparison to Miyamoto's *Mario Kart* genesis. As I said in my *Speed Punks* review, a team's only real ammo in gunning for success is to touch upon the basics—namely, graphics, cool level design and strong play mechanics. Why kart racers are still as prominent as they are in the PS's last days is a mystery... but like the dozens of fighters available, you just have to shake your head and smile. Luckily, with Eidos' *Magical Racing Tour* in hand, it's much easier to don that grin.

A Disney racer? But where did all my favorite icons go? Mickey?!? You can just imagine the conversation between Eidos and Disney executives...

Eidos: We'd love to develop a comical kart racer for children starring the loveable Disney cast.
Disney: Sounds great... did ya bring a briefcase full of unmarked bills?
Eidos: Well, we envisioned Mickey, Donald, Goofy and the rest of the gang rocketing around famed Disney locales... Space Mountain, for instance.
Disney: Yeahhh... It's just that, between our Rare and Square deals, we can't release too many of our more popular characters...
Eidos: O.K., how about Scrooge McDuck and his three nephews?
Disney: Yeahhh... Well—no.
Eidos: Minnie?
Disney: We were thinking more along the lines of Amanda Sparkle, Baron Karlott and Bruno Biggs, among others.
Eidos: Amanda who?!
Disney: Oh, and we can throw in Chip and Dale a a little bonus...
Eidos: Would ya like small or large bills?

O.K., there went my meager attempt at humor.. But in all seriousness, *Magical Racing Tour* lacks any notable players (with the exception of a certain cricket and the dynamic chipmunk duo). Then again, what the game lacks in character, it makes up for in its various levels, which are in fact modeled around popular rides within the Disney theme park

Hmmm... speak of the Devil... Theme looks like *MRT*'s strongest selling point by far. *MRT* includes every ride you and I grew up on (and lost our lunch on): Pirates of the Caribbean, Splash Mountain Typhoon Lagoon...it's all there. In fact, the stage select screen's basically a map of Disney World.. complete with a sappy intro by Jiminy Cricket.

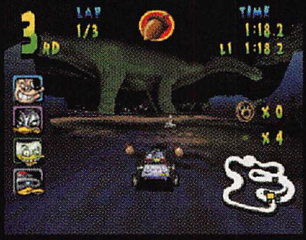
While *MRT* is obviously designed for kids (six to eight years old, perhaps... perfect for Cerberus) the level of nostalgia in this game's ridiculous. You might be playing *Code Veronica* one minute, but as soon as you hear the welcome sounds of the Haunted Mansion, your inner child comes running... even if for only a few minutes. Let's face it This is a kids' game through and through, and it's been tailored accordingly. Weapons do come into play, but *MRT*'s AI competitors don't offer as serious a challenge as most kart racers' do. Just be sure to avoid getting nailed by the frog item at al costs—it temporally transforms players into a slow moving amphibian. And I thought the lightning weapon in *MK* was annoying!

I can admit that I was far from excited when *MR* first rolled onto my desk. After giving it some quality time, however, I was simply overwhelmed by *MRT*'s 'cute factor'...and you will be, too. There is NO escape! It truly is the happiest place on earth.. unless you're the poor sap who gets struck in the head by a flying piece of shrapnel. F



Walt Disney World® Quest Magical Racing Tour™













P PREVIEW	FURY: Small world? Try seeing the world through my eyes...	Developer - Crystal Dynamics Publisher - Eidos	1-4 Players Available Now

COMING SOON

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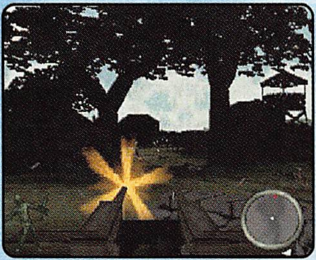
PlayStation

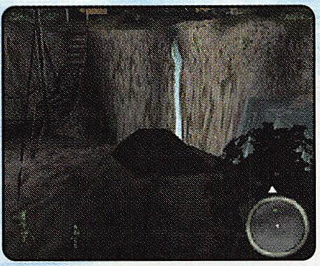


Army Men: World War

Developer
3DO
Publisher
3DO

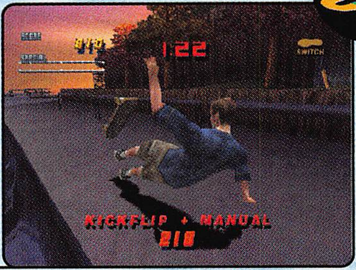
O.K., soldiers, it's time to separate the plastic men from the... well, plastic boys. Most of you won't come back in one piece, but rest assured that a recyclable heaven awaits you all. It might sound grim, but in *Army Men: World War*, the body count's never been greater. Think of "Saving Private Ryan" and all its Spielberg-induced D-Day insanity, and you've pretty much got a handle on 3DO's newest *Army Men* endeavor... Howitzers and all, this is THE PlayStation war game to look forward to.



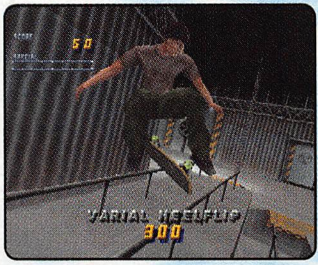


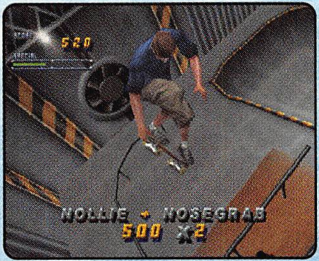
Tony Hawk Pro Skater 2

Developer
Neversoft
Publisher
Activision



Boy, we never saw this one coming... That's right, pull off those scabs and throw your life insurance out the window, 'cause Tony and the boys are heading back to the PlayStation, courtesy of Neversoft. Railslides, ollies, methods, nosegrabs, stalefish... they're all in there, and only a true master of Hawk Fu (thanks, Posty) can conquer *THPS2*'s all-new skate parks. But will the sequel include a Roswell level? You'll have to break a few major limbs to find out (was his foot supposed to touch his head?!). Anyone up for renting *Gleaming the Cube?*



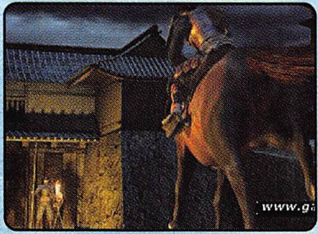




Onimusha: Warlords

Developer
Capcom
Publisher
Capcom

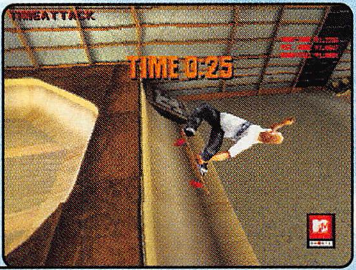
Resident Evil meets feudal Japan in this ultimate survival horror/action title... Capcom's certain to deliver another classic with the beautiful scenery, unbelievable character designs and samurai that are *Onimusha*... are ya excited yet? The story line of this new *Onimusha* follows the life of Samanosuke, a brave and valiant warrior intent on rescuing Princess Yukihime. Along the way, Samanosuke will battle legions of evil samurai with a multitude of different katanas. Capcom's looking to this game for its PS2 bread and butter, and if past games like *Resident Evil* and *Dino Crisis* mean anything, we'll all be salivating for months over this one.



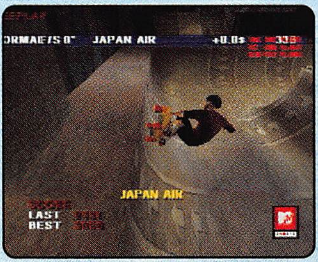


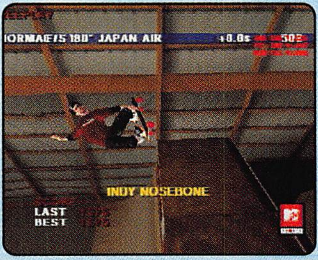
MTV: Sports Skateboarding

Developer
Yellowbelly
Publisher
THQ



Considering *Tony Hawk Pro Skater*'s tremendous success, it's easy to understand why developers would want to follow in Neversoft's footsteps... but is it really a good idea (hello, *Thrasher*?!?)? *MTV Generator* was definitely a solid title (just call me Mixmaster Fury), but memories of a certain snowboarding title are still painful... Much like EA's *Street Sk8ter 2, MTVSS* looks to mimic *Pro Skater* in almost every avenue. A legion of twenty pro skaters awaits in this game, as well as twenty-five bone-snapping levels—and would you believe a half-pipe (helmet... I don't need no stinking helmet!?)?





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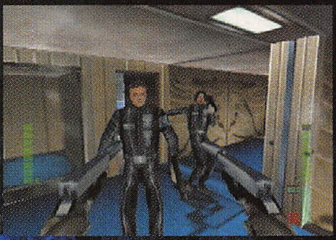
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If you own an N64, the chances are that you've logged more than your fair share of time on Rare's *GoldenEye*. The title has proven to be so successful that most thought it would never be replicated. Then word began to spread about *Perfect Dark*, and it looked like *GoldenEye*'s impressive legacy might finally fall in jeopardy. Rare repeatedly delayed *Perfect Dark*, however, and with each setback, *GoldenEye* fans breathed a little easier.

Finally, the planets must have come into alignment somehow, 'cause here I am staring at a completed copy of Rare's newest brainchild. Now, I'm a true skeptic at heart (I still believe "Episode 1" was a belated April Fools' joke), so I approached *GoldenEye*'s pseudo-sequel rather cautiously. The game was no disappointment, however: As I turned it on and witnessed the Rare and *Perfect Dark* logos appear, any and all thoughts of disappointment left me in a flash (along with my already questionable work ethic). Goodbye, social life and hello, *Perfect Dark*...





O.K., let's get a few minor things out of the way... Remember all the talk of a Game Boy interface that would allow a player to mold his/her own (essentially, anyone's) likeness onto a playable character in *PD*'s multi-player mode? Well, sadly, it was scrapped—and realistically, for good reason. *Perfect Dark* is already violent enough (an understatement, really), and things would only have grown worse given a face-mapping feature. The thought of gamers uploading pics of their Algebra teachers and shoving them into a bloody mêlée did *not* sit well with Nintendo. Then there was the frame-rate issue... It was my understanding that the game was initially held back so Rare could spend more time optimizing the frame-rate. Unfortunately, though, the end result's a mixed bag... Like most N64 games that utilize the Expansion Pak, it's really a matter of cleaner visuals vs. a more consistent frame-rate. Some of the levels (both in the multi- and single-player missions) offer a fine mixture of both, but once things really get going and enemies litter the screen, there's no way around the slowdown. Oh, well, it never hindered my experience.

Now, this is the N64, right? Right?!? Should this game really look this good? Perhaps not, friends, but *PD* really is an utterly gorgeous game, and perhaps the most visually impressive N64 cart I've ever seen. The texture quality is tops, but the insanity really stems from the freakish level design.

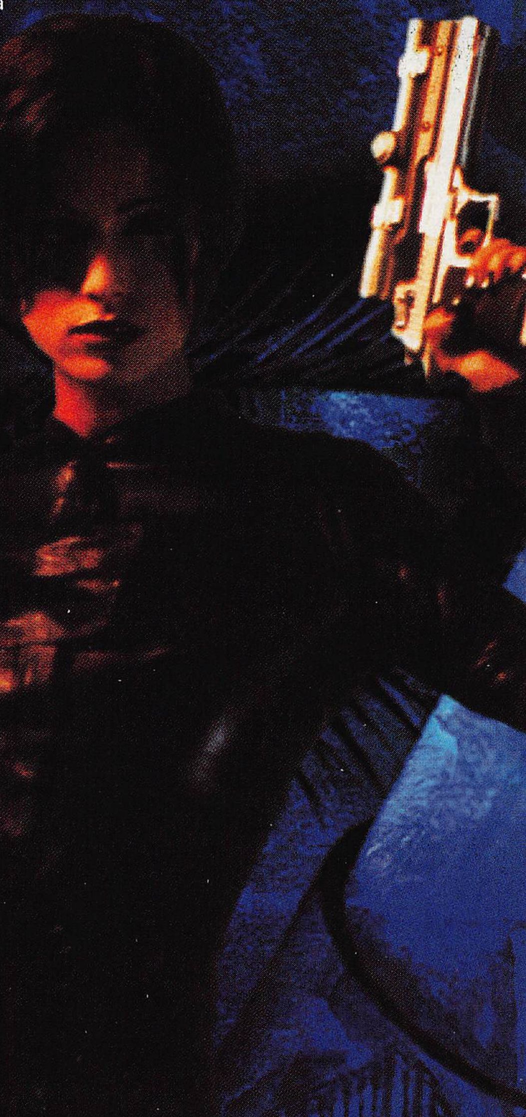




Truthfully, the game is so stylized that just describing it is a feat in itself; it needs to be seen to be believed, and ESPECIALLY on the Fun Machine. Imagine taking the ominous worlds of "Dark City," Akira's "Neo Tokyo" and "Blade Runner" and injecting them directly into a cart... It's hard to imagine, but that's exactly what Rare did. I think what truly did it for me, though, and what's bound to keep players doing double takes, is the lighting. Again, you've got to see it in person—effects like these just never seemed possible on the N64. Yet there are times when it's so unbelievably bright that you'll actually squint, then you'll fire a round at a light, and things will get very dark. Every last light in the game can be blown out—and take my word, there are a million of them!



The solo mission in *PD* plays like a great episode of "The X-Files" (O.K., maybe like a great season of "The X-Files"), and the cinemas take interactivity to a whole new level. Pay careful attention to them... if you're impatient and interrupt the intermissions, you might encounter a hostile force prematurely. On one level in particular, the cinema shows a guard walking into the distance. Jump right in before he's out of your range, however, and you'll be standing in front of him, directly in his line of fire. If you're playing the game in Agent mode, it's not such a big deal; its enemy AI is toned way down. But attempt your trickery in Special Agent mode (and, eventually, Perfect Agent mode, if you've got the super skills), and you're in for a helluva time. According to one Nintendo rep, 90% of players will beat the game as an Agent, 50% as a Special Agent, and—get this—only 5% will beat it as a Perfect Agent (a possible mention on Fury's "Tales of the Hard-core?")!



Wow, I'm nearly out of space, and I haven't even mentioned the multi-player game yet <whew>... So let me briefly fill the fans in on what's sure to be *PD*'s main selling point. Unlike *GoldenEye*, all of *PD*'s multi-play stages have been crafted from the ground up—they are NOT in-game levels. Players now also have the opportunity to save their stats and battle it out against as many as eight 'bots (or "simulants," as they're referred to in the game). Some simulants, like the 'meat' simulant, are excellent for target practice, while others, like the revenge simulant, will hunt down and butcher whoever took them out last. Man, I still haven't even scratched the surface... Oh, well, I'll just leave more for you guys to figure out on your own (and believe me, you'll definitely want to)!







Like Sonic Team, Treasure, Team Ninja and a handful of other premiere developers, the *GoldenEye* Team has now proven its ability as one of the industry's best. It would take a few summers of play before I could say for sure that *PD* is better than *GoldenEye*—but either way, the game's an absolutely worthy successor. The Stamper bros. should be proud... we'll be seeing this one on the top ten charts long after the Dolphin surfaces. **FURY**

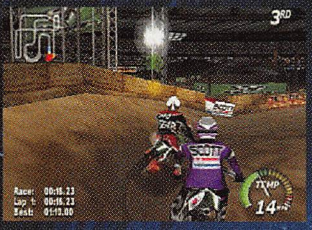
Developer - Rare	1-4 Players	Fury: A perfect example
Publisher - Nintendo	Available Now	of Rare's handiwork!

P PREVIEW

Given Nintendo's track record of delaying good games to make them great, the news that *Excitebike 64* is right on schedule comes as a huge surprise. I can't say much has changed in the game since I last saw it, but that's no dig against it. The early preview I played was in near-beta form. Indeed, it was almost complete.

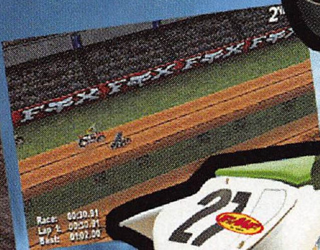
Excitebike 64 features a ton of cues that hark back and pay homage to the most original *Excitebike*. Obviously, though, it's not the same game we played nearly two decades ago. It's changed from 2D to 3D, and the added dimension affects the game greatly. Its physics engine has also been retooled, and is one of the best I've encountered, if not *the* best. Its bikes handle like they would on real dirt and asphalt—and if you don't believe me, just try entering a turn too hot, and see if you can make it out unscathed.

As for course layout, the game's dips, dunes and moguls are placed perfectly. The courses are challenging, but once you get the hang of it, it's not impossible to shave a good ten to twenty seconds off of a lap time. Left Field has axed all the nondescript courses in this remake. Instead, it features bona fide dirt tracks like those found in Las Vegas, New York, etc. Each course is nicely modeled in mid-res mode, with little to no Blur-o-Vision, and the backdrops are but an inch away from being absolutely gorgeous. Hey, what a novel idea: a relatively sharp-looking game with a decent frame-rate and no overblown textures!







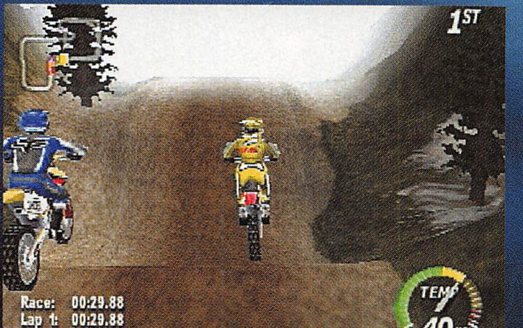



The gameplay features that really hark back to the *Excitebike* of old are the turbo boost and temperature management... Hold the turbo button too long, and your bike will overheat—but then again (as before), cause another racer to 'eat it,' and the temperature will drop back toward the minimum. It's nice to be the *Excitebike*...

Now, don't get nostalgic on me, there's no reason to be: Nintendo's thrown in a cache of goodies—including the old NES classic—as an Easter egg. Of course, I'd rather play the old arcade game, which differed slightly from the NES version. I'll take what I can get, though, and that mini-game alone is worth a good ten points on the ol' viewpoint scale. Other secrets include a desert rally-style race and an amped-up 2.5D (though I hate that term) *Excitebike*...

When Nintendo's involved, there's not much that goes wrong—and so, so much that goes right. *Excitebike 64* is but another example of why quality always beats quantity. This Fun Machine racer's clearly different enough from the recently released *Ridge Racer 64* to warrant a purchase. Anyone out there taking notes?





Cerberfucius: One who excels at handling an Excitebike may lead a productive family life. One who does not lives a life without children.

R REVIEW	CERBERUS: NOW YOU'RE PLAYING WITH POWER!	DEVELOPER - LEFT FIELD	1-4 PLAYERS	VIEWPOINT SCORE: 91
		PUBLISHER - NINTENDO	AVAILABLE NOW	

Ah, yes... this looks like familiar ground. A bit too familiar, perhaps? It seems like only last issue that I was previewing yet another N64 3D platformer (I know you're counting the very days, if not the minutes, till we review *Blues Bros. 2000*), and would you believe that here I am, staring blank-faced at yet another fine addition to that lineup. Yeah, I suppose I could've reviewed *Ridge Racer V* or *Street Fighter EX3*, but I opted for a preview of *Duck Dodgers*. Hardcore—it's an unforgiving lifestyle.



Saving graces come in many forms and sizes. *Virtua Cop* DC was rescued by a $30 price tag, *Chu Chu Rocket* battled dated graphics with the honor of being the first DC online game, and *Superman 64*... uh, it had semi-cool box art and could be used to prop up an unbalanced dining table. Sure, "Duck Dodgers" might be a hot property in its own right (what Saturday morning was complete without the antics of "Duck Dodgers in the 24th and a Half Century?!?"), but its true redeeming factor is its developer, Paradigm. Somehow, between crafting next-gen U.S. Government flight sims, Paradigm has found the time to enter the insanely competitive home gaming market. Its first endeavor, *Pilotwings 64,* wasn't a bad start (especially on the heels of Miyamoto's original SNES classic), and after teaming up with Video Systems for *F1 WGP,* Paradigm's role as one of the more skilled N64 developers around was only solidified. Oh, and there was also *Beetle Adventure Racing,* which certainly provided a solid package (though I'm wholly against men driving VW Bugs—not to mention Rabbits).

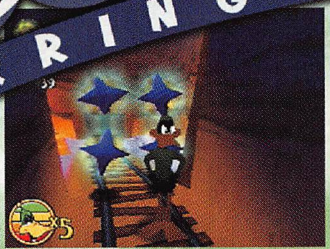
Forget Austin Powers and James Bond—when planet Earth's threatened by an evil madman wielding a gigantic death ray (I'll call it the Fury Parsons Project), there's but one force that can save our undeserving hides: Duck Dodgers (a.k.a. Daffy Duck). O.K., O.K., for the sake of those who unfortu-

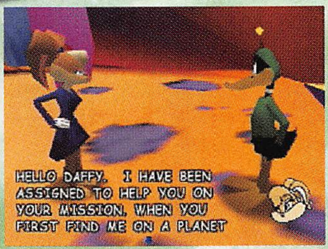


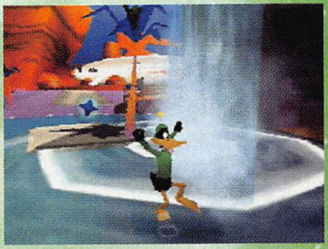


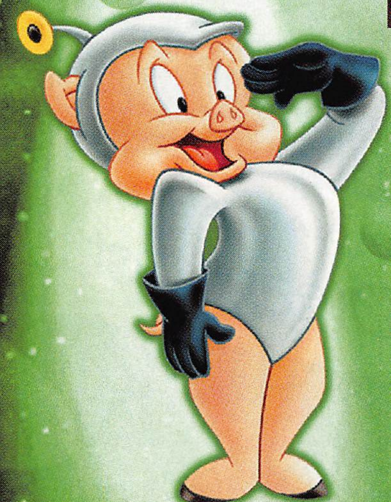


LOONEY TUNES DUCK DODGERS STARRING: DAFFY DUCK









nately sat through all of "Mission to Mars" (myself included), I'll cut the melodrama... Marvin the Martian's up to his old pranks in this game, and unsurprisingly, his Illudium Q-36 Space Modulator's all out of energy. Ever heard that one before? It's up to you, then, to assume control of Daffy's alter ego and prevent Marvin's ruthless cohorts (Mugsy, Siam, etc.) from collecting all the precious atoms. Luckily for us inhabitants of Earth, time is definitely on our side—the atoms are scattered about multiple sprawling planets, and involve exploration of over thirty Warner Bros.-inspired levels. And yes, Acme products play an integral role.

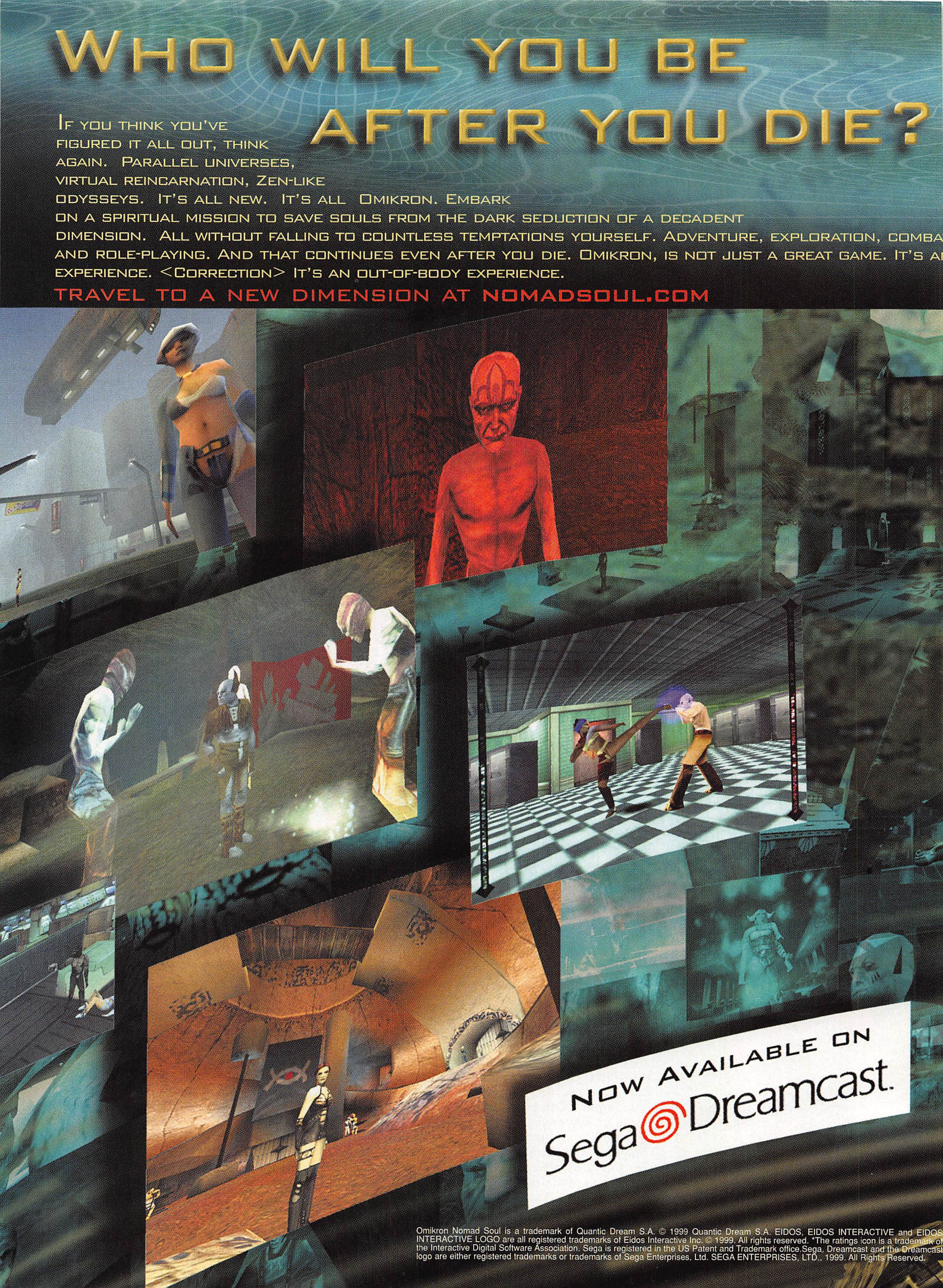
What gives *Duck Dodgers* an edge over the standard N64 platformer is the visual quality. Paradigm's injected its latest project with colorful and detailed graphics that really draw players into Daffy's comical misadventures. The voice acting also adds to the game's humor, and is well presented in the opening cinema. "Can you do it, Dodgers?" "Indubitably!" Unfortunately, the game suffers from a severe case of scavenger hunt-itis, and as a result, the gameplay tends to get boring quickly.

While there's undeniably no lack of platformers on the "fun machine," *Duck Dodgers*' offer of simplistic play mechanics, eye-catching graphics and nostalgic bliss should make the game a 'must' for die-hard Warner Bros. fanatics and young gamers alike. Of course, reviewing the game all depends on the actions of one simple-minded duck... it's too bad there's no fallout shelters in L.A. ('cept maybe the new Metro Line)... F

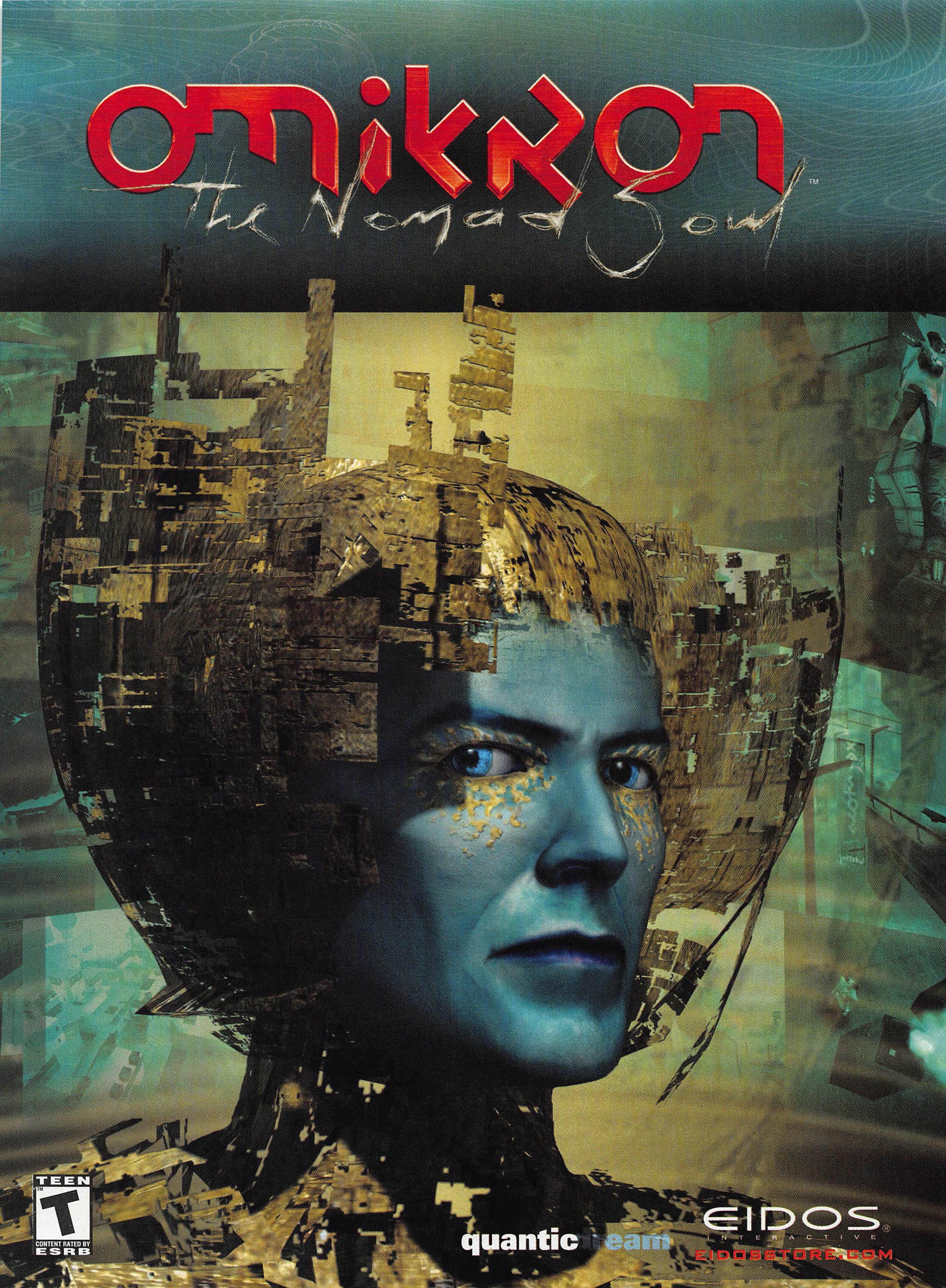
DEVELOPER - PARADIGM	1 PLAYER	FURY: A DUCK, A MARTIAN, AND
PUBLISHER - INFOGRAMES	AVAILABLE 2ND QTR.	THE QUEST TO SAVE MANKIND.

P PREVIEW





WHO WILL YOU BE AFTER YOU DIE?
IF YOU THINK YOU'VE FIGURED IT ALL OUT, THINK AGAIN. PARALLEL UNIVERSES, VIRTUAL REINCARNATION, ZEN-LIKE ODYSSEYS. IT'S ALL NEW. IT'S ALL OMIKRON. EMBARK ON A SPIRITUAL MISSION TO SAVE SOULS FROM THE DARK SEDUCTION OF A DECADENT DIMENSION. ALL WITHOUT FALLING TO COUNTLESS TEMPTATIONS YOURSELF. ADVENTURE, EXPLORATION, COMBA AND ROLE-PLAYING. AND THAT CONTINUES EVEN AFTER YOU DIE. OMIKRON, IS NOT JUST A GREAT GAME. IT'S A EXPERIENCE. <CORRECTION> IT'S AN OUT-OF-BODY EXPERIENCE.
TRAVEL TO A NEW DIMENSION AT NOMADSOUL.COM
NOW AVAILABLE ON
Sega Dreamcast.
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The Nomad Soul
TM
TEEN
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CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
quantic dream
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INTERACTIVE
EIDOSSTORE.COM

Coming Soon

Coming Soon Coming Soon Coming Soon Coming Soon Coming Soon Coming Soon Coming Soon



Hey You, Pikachu

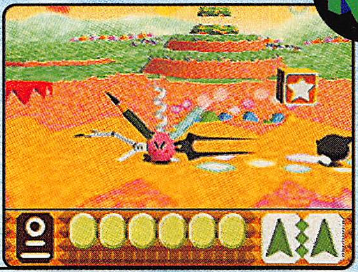
Developer
Nintendo
Publisher
Nintendo

This game, known as *Pikachu VRS* in Japan, is Nintendo's answer to Sega's *Seaman: the Forbidden Pet*. A virtual pet simulator, *Hey you, Pikachu* is like a Tamagotchi on your N64—everyday activities include feeding, playing, and talking with Pikachu... Talking? Why yes, you too can look like a fool by attaching a mini-microphone to your N64 controller and speaking to Pikachu with simple words and phrases such as "kawai" (cute), "baka" (idiot), and "Suezo o koroshite" (kill Suezo). Word has it other *Pokemon* characters will also make appearances in the game. Hey you, loser-holding-a-microphone-and-talking-to-the-tv, this game should be out by Christmas.





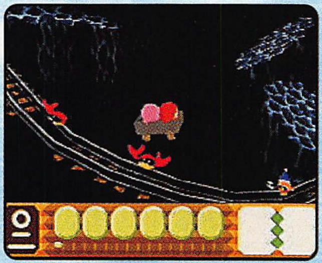
Kirby 64: The Crystal Shards



Developer
Nintendo
Publisher
Nintendo

This game sucks... a lot. I mean, that's what Kirby does... suck in his opponents and use their skills against them. In fact, the roly poly pink guy has picked up even more skills in this 2.5D side-scroller, which is reminiscent of platformers back on the SNES. Kirby can now combine skills—mix a spike and a fire attack, and you'll get flaming arrows! Everyone who's played this game has come away smiling, and luckily, you won't have to hold your breath for long (no pun intended), as the game's due out in June.







The World Is Not Enough

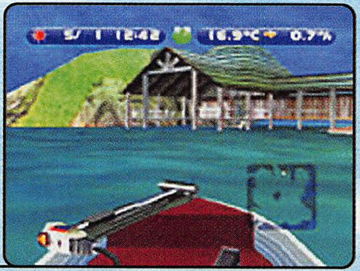
Developer
Eurocom
Publisher
EA

Before the arrival of *Perfect Dark*, the mere mention of *GoldenEye* had N64 owners giddy with glee. Well, *T.W.I.N.E.* isn't developed by Rare, but it **is** another Bond game which promises lots of fast-paced, secret agent, shooting insanity. Eurocom is at the helm of this one, the company also responsible for *Mortal Kombat 4*, *Duke Nukem: Zer0 H0ur*, and *Hydro Thunder* on N64. When it's all said and done, there'll be over 40 weapons and gadgets to play with, dialogue and cut-scenes straight from the movie, and the expected N64 multi-player madness.





Bass Fishing



Developer
Nintendo
Publisher
Nintendo

This one is still not officially announced for the U.S., but it makes sense for Nintendo to bring over this first party Japanese game (originally called *Shigesato Itoi's Bass Tsuri #1*... let's hope that name gets changed if it comes here). Plus, it's one more reason to own an N64 fishing controller (have you seen these things yet... they even have an analog stick on the side)! The game offers simultaneous, multiple camera angles, colorful characters, and a replay mode so you have evidence to show your friends "Look! That's the big one that got away..."



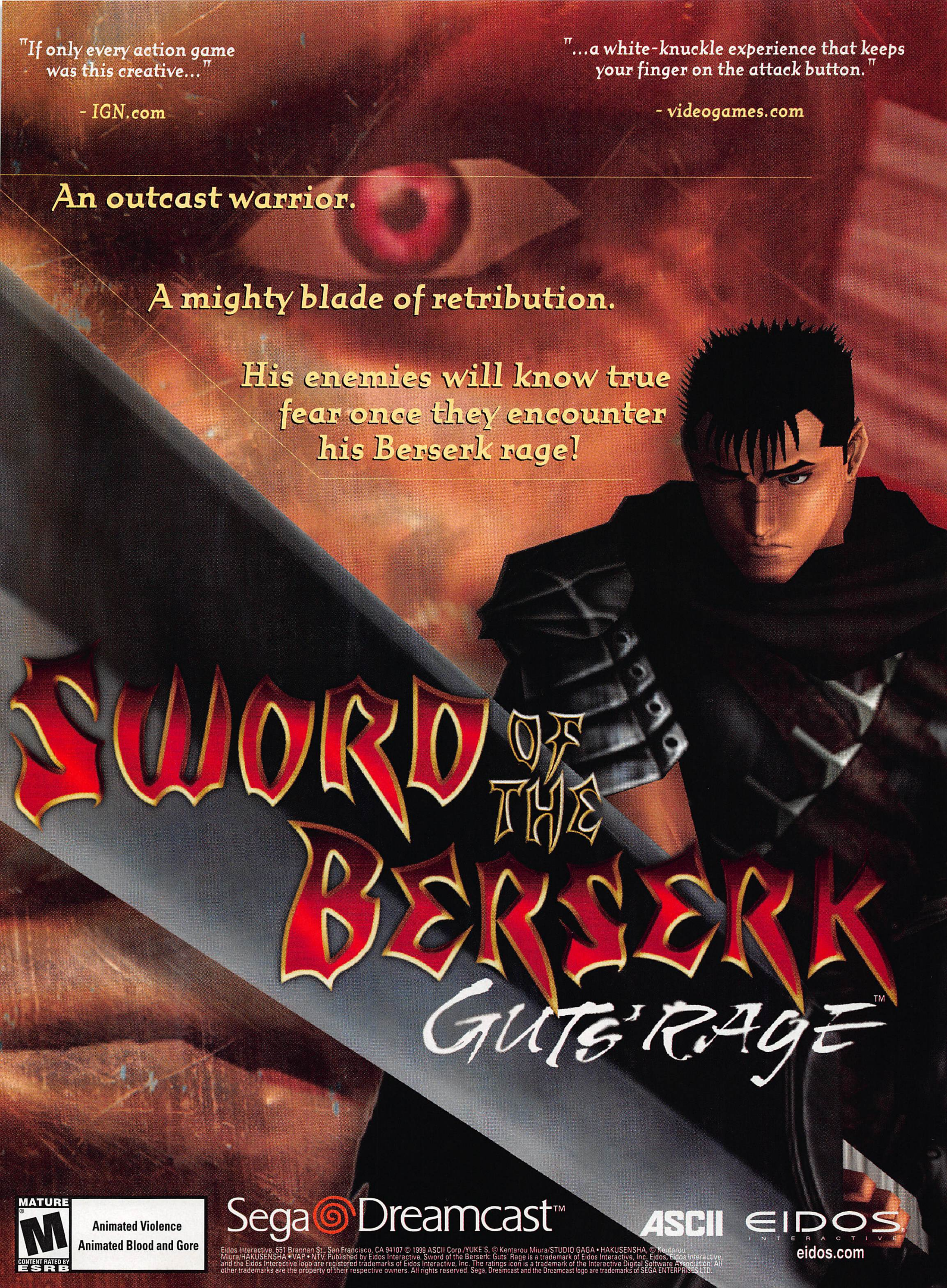




SMACK! DOWN!
BETRAYAL
HEARTACHE
TREACHERY
DECEIT
THEY DON'T FORGIVE.
AND THEY DON'T FORGET.
Lay the SmackDown! on your enemies with your own created jabroni or as one of the WF's top Superstars. Make friends then break them as you roam backstage from the boiler room to the kitchen. Just remember that backstage politics can work against you – don't let The Rock™ run-ins, well-placed metal chairs, and McMahon appointed guest referees get you in the end.
Huge Backstage Area
Special Guest Referee
4-Player Action
PlayStation
SMACK! DOWN!
TEEN
T
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
SLUS-00927
THQ
PlayStation
World Wrestling Federation®
www.thq.com/wwf
WF.com
THQ



FEATURES:
Hack and slash through more than 30 types of grotesque enemies, each with unique and fearsome attacks
Fight in two combat modes (including the devastating Berserk rage), unleash powerful combination moves and wield four deadly weapons
Over one hour of engrossing cinematic movie sequences utilizing enhanced in-game models
Superb high resolution graphics with fluid combat animations
Sega Dreamcast.
SWORD OF THE BERSERK
GUTS' RAGE
SEGA
ASCII
EIDOS
MATURE
M


"If only every action game was this creative..."
- IGN.com
"...a white-knuckle experience that keeps your finger on the attack button."
- videogames.com
An outcast warrior.
A mighty blade of retribution.
His enemies will know true fear once they encounter his Berserk rage!
SWORD OF THE BERSERK
GUTS' RAGE™
MATURE
M
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
Animated Violence
Animated Blood and Gore
Sega Dreamcast™
ASCII
EIDOS INTERACTIVE
eidos.com
Eidos Interactive, 651 Brannan St., San Francisco, CA 94107 © 1999 ASCII Corp./YUKE'S, © Kentarou Miura/STUDIO GAGA • HAKUSENSHA, © Kentarou Miura/HAKUSENSHA • VAP • NTV. Published by Eidos Interactive. Sword of the Berserk: Guts' Rage is a trademark of Eidos Interactive, Inc. Eidos, Eidos Interactive, and the Eidos Interactive logo are registered trademarks of Eidos Interactive, Inc. The ratings icon is a trademark of the Interactive Digital Software Association. All other trademarks are the property of their respective owners. All rights reserved. Sega, Dreamcast and the Dreamcast logo are trademarks of SEGA ENTERPRISES LTD.

Dreamcast

Reviews

Previews







One of the hardest parts of a job that admittedly isn't all that difficult is in fielding constant questions from droves of readers on a subject that's often bittersweet, like, "Why is it that we see annual updates of *Tomb Raider* without fail, yet we don't get legendary games like *Tobal No. 2* in the U.S.?" I, of course, then feel compelled to rant ad nauseam that, "If only more people bought games that are considered niche titles (i.e., *Tail of the Sun, Tobal No. 1, Grandia*, etc.), publishers would be elated to give us more." Heck, back in the day, Working Designs built its rep on giving gamers what they wanted, regardless of platform or politics (sadly, those days are long gone).

But the more I think about it, the more it irks me. What, you ask? Well, the simple fact that it's the same guy that's e-mailing me, bitching up a storm about why we never get those 'cool games' that isn't buying them when we do get them—the games that we editors prattle on about each month that don't have massive marketing budgets or television blitzes that would make Hollywood studios blush (games like *Silent Bomber*, for example). The math is pretty simple, people: If we buy it, publishers will give us more. Think of it as positive reinforcement... I mean, would all of you who write in each month to support our love for 2D games really buy them en masse if they came out now? Well, pretty soon, you'll have another chance to put your money where your mouth is... The question is, are you up for it?



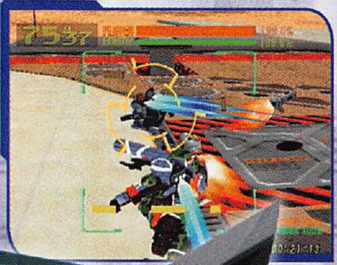




CYBER TROOPERS
電脳戦機バーチャロン
VIRTUAL ON
M.S.B.S. Ver.5.4
ORATORIO TANGRAM™



When we got wind that Sega wasn't going to publish *Virtual On: Oratorio Tangram* in the States, we were crushed. After all, this was one of Sega's marquee titles, and a (excuse the pun) virtual legend in Japan. Apparently, Sega wasn't going to import it simply because the online network support wouldn't be up in time (In time for what, a late summer release? C'mon Sega, you can give us a better excuse than that). Unfortunately, this decision left *VOOT* in domestic limbo. So what did we do? We got on the *VOOT* hard-core bandwagon and rallied publishers to its side, trying to convince them one way (through massive amounts of editorial) or another (by actually calling a number of them and pleading on hands and knees that they bring it out), and lo and behold, someone listened... Activision heard our pleas, and is now set to deliver *VOOT* to all of you that have clamored for it since its Japanese release some six months ago. To say we were elated would be putting it mildly (I actually saw Dangohead doing cartwheels through the office). However, with that elation comes a fair amount of trepidation—this is where you come in...





If you own a Dreamcast, you **must** buy this game. If you don't own a Dreamcast, you **must** go buy one and buy this game. Why? Because the only way Activision (and other publishers—you'd better believe Sega will be watching this one closely) will know whether to give us more quality titles is if you vote with your wallet. Yes, if you want more gems like this localized for U.S. consumption (games that a publisher might otherwise pass over due to theme, complexity or perceived saleability), it's time to put your money where your mouth is, Joe Hardcore.

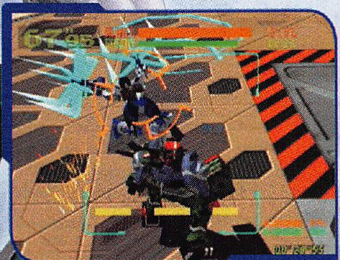
And let me say this: If this game fails to make a big noise at retailers across America, and you're one of the individuals that passed on it because, "Well, it's not really my type of game," or, "I'll get it when it drops in price," or, "I can't wait to get it used," don't ever complain again about missing a game that you really wanted to see over here. Hey—if you don't vote, don't complain.

So take one last look at the shots scattered about this page. If you don't buy this one, don't expect to see any future chapters of the series, or any others that'll likely perish alongside this one due to gamer apathy. C'mon, people... I know you have it in ya. **ECM**





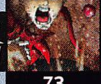






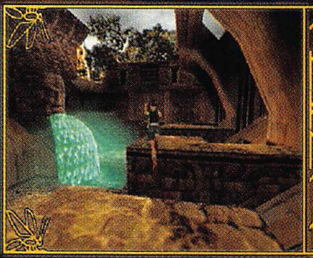






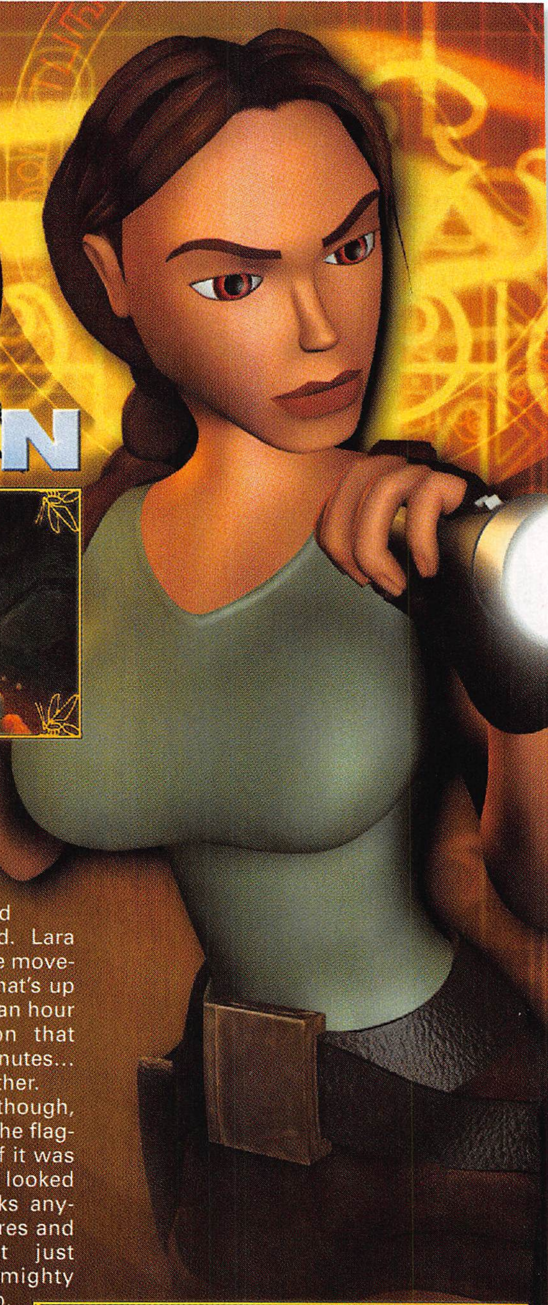
Viewpoint Score :90	Developer - Sega	1-2 Players	ECM: Sometimes we	R Review
	Publisher - Activision	Available Now	get what we ask for...	

TOMB RAIDER
THE LAST REVELATION









I think that if you asked most of the GameFan staff, they'd agree that the best perk of working for a video game magazine is playing games all day long and calling it 'work.' Writing a review is a different story, though. I'm not going to lie; writing a few hundred words (read: 'real work') after playing something like *Zelda* isn't as much fun as killing that nasty Octorok in Lord Jabu Jabu with the mighty boomerang. In the case of *Tomb Raider: the Last Revelation,* though, getting to the write-up was like a way out, an escape, if you will... an escape from 'playing' *Tomb Raider.* This review is where I get to tell you—no, warn you—about the evils of Lara Croft. And I thought I was done with this after the PlayStation version...

Tomb Raider has sold millions and millions of copies... so what do I have to warn anyone about? Everyone knows Lara, from Tibetan housewives to Little Timmy. Gauchos on the pampas of Argentina are familiar with Lara and her set of guns... What not everyone may know just yet, though, is how awful *The Last Revelation* is. I'd say bad games are pretty common—but games as bad as *The Last Revelation* (thankfully) don't come along every day.

In its heyday, *Tomb Raider* was anything but typical; a hip chick, guns, puzzles, tons of action... what more could any red-blooded American want? When *Tomb Raider II* came around, it gave us more of the same, with slightly better graphics and gameplay. The series took a hit, though, when I got my hands on *Duke Nukem: Time to Kill.* It did *Tomb Raider* better than Lara, and with a much better game engine to boot. Its control was also much better and less frustrating. Two more sequels and Core still hasn't perfected tomb raiding... I'd say the formula's been sabotaged.

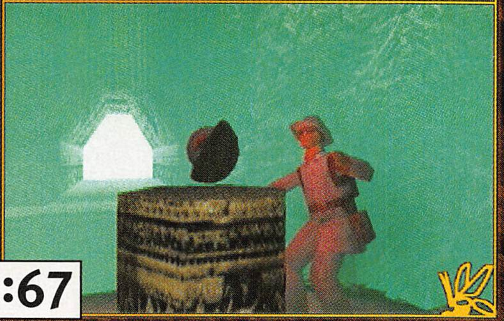
O.K., think of the game with the worst control you've ever played and multiply it by fifty—and it'll still be more responsive and easier to swallow than *Tomb Raider: The Last Revelation.* Play it for a couple of minutes. It feels like the control's in another time zone, doesn't it? Simple tasks, like pulling levers or grabbing ropes, become exercises in futility, and are hampered even more by the atrocious DC d-pad. Lara can't even side-step, and many simple movements become three-point turns. What's up with that noise? I spent close to half an hour in the 'flashback' training mission that should've taken just a couple of minutes... The dang thing can't be bypassed, either.

Even if the control was O.K., though, *Tomb Raider* still wouldn't live up to the flagship pedestal that Eidos has it on. If it was my cash cow, I'd make certain that it looked good, and *The Last Revelation* looks anything but good. It sports poor textures and blurry backgrounds—things that just shouldn't appear on the almighty Dreamcast. I would've expected—no, did expect—not only massive visual improvements in this game, but that it would look at least as good as its PC counterpart. Yet it doesn't look nearly as good as its Wintel brother, and Eidos has made no efforts to make it look much better than the PlayStation edition. Think of the PS version on Bleem!, and that's more or less *TRIV*...

Another year, another Lara... I, for one, am not going to fall victim to a game cranked out for the sake of making money—and you shouldn't, either. Lara's latest adventure is by far her worst. *Tomb Raider*'s in dire need of a complete overhaul, from graphics to gameplay... and while you're at it, why don't you purchase a copy of Lightwave and re-render Lara up to Y2K standards?

Cerberus is getting too old for tomb raiding... He's starting to sag like Lara's guns.







REVIEW	CERBERUS: *TOMB RAIDER: THE LAST CRUSADE*, ANYONE?	DEVELOPER - CORE / PUBLISHER - EIDOS	1 PLAYER / AVAILABLE NOW	VIEWPOINT SCORE :67



TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER

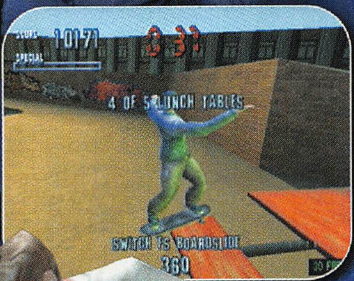
Any game that jumps ship from the PlayStation to the Dreamcast is scrutinized under an observatory-sized lens. There are no exceptions, and there's no doubt about it. After all, the Dreamcast can handle its polys better than most supercomputers. Its triangle-computing prowess has already been proven in the likes of *Soul Calibur* and *DOA 2*—but how does the Katana chipset fare in the Ports department? Some ports have been relatively successful—*Shadowman* and *V8: Second Offense* come to mind. But for every good port, there's a Hype Machine-driven *Soul Reaver* (all talk, no action). Not that *Soul Reaver* was a bad DC game... but even on DC, it was nothing more than the PlayStation rev in slightly better looking duds. Eidos swore that *Soul Reaver* would receive amped-up visuals, but it never did—aside from increased texture quality, of course.

Now it's time for Neversoft's *Tony Hawk* to enter center stage on the DC. I'd expect this port to outdo the original, since Neversoft gave Treyarch (developer of *Draconus)* full access to anything and everything related to the project, from source code to textures. Now, I'm no programmer, but porting a game to a superior console isn't brain surgery. Think of it this way: A programmer tells himself, "I had X amount of memory before, and now I have ten times that much for the same information—I must be in heaven."



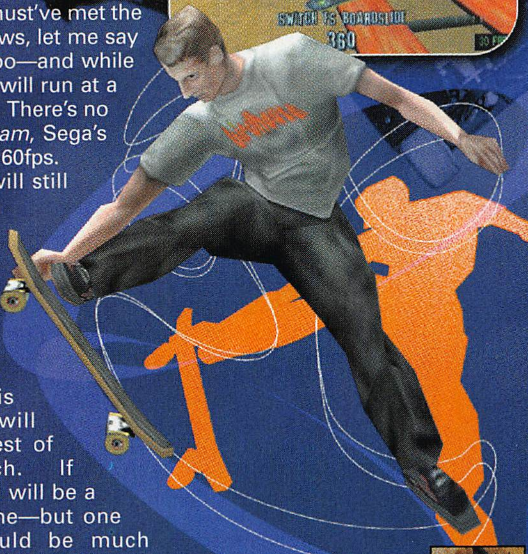


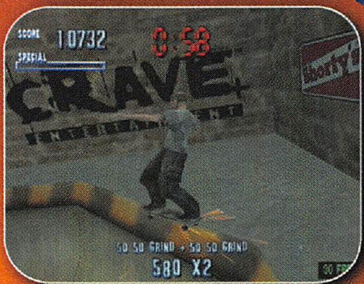
For the most part, this port isn't looking too shabby, but then again, it is just another port, sans the needed polish. According to Crave's PR department, it has yet to improve almost three quarters of the art (textures, etc.) in the game. So in essence, what I've been playing is *Tony Hawk* on *Bleem!*. The added lighting effects haven't been corrected, so most of the skaters have a strange green light-sourced haze at all times. Crave has yet to increase the polys for its models, as well. They're all running in the neighborhood of 400 polygons, exactly what the PlayStation was running. What happened to the 1,500+ polygon models Crave bragged about? They must've met the cutting room floor, along with the four-player mode... To point out some other flaws, let me say that the game's depth cuing could use some work, too—and while I'm at it, I might as well mention that *Tony Hawk* will run at a skimpy (for Dreamcast) thirty frames per second. There's no excuse for this when *Virtual On: Oratorio Tangram*, Sega's graphically intense masterpiece, runs at a steady 60fps.





Flaws or no flaws, *Tony Hawk Pro Skater* will still sell like a rare collectible on eBay. It's a little disheartening, though, to know that the game may end up 'as is' when we final get a beta version. If by some miracle Treyarch manages to pull an ace out of the hat and pack *Tony Hawk* with more polygons, better textures, a higher frame-rate and a four-player mode, then this DC rev will be the best of the bunch. If not, it still will be a good game—but one that could be much better. **C**







DEVELOPER - TREYARCH	1-2 PLAYERS	CERBERUS: IS THE THIRD TIME *REALLY* THE CHARM?	P PREVIEW
PUBLISHER - CRAVE	AVAILABLE NOW		



Dreamcast

COMING SOON

Dreamcast

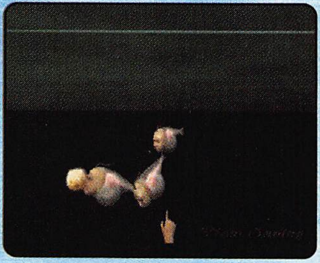


Seaman: The Forbidden Pet

Developer
Sega

Publisher
Sega

First it was the Tamagotchi craze, then Digimon, and now *Seaman*. I know the name sounds perverted, but this little virtual pet's bound to entertain for hours... With its packaged microphone in hand, gamers can become either Seaman's caretaker or his torturer—depending, of course, on who's at the helm. *Uh, Fury, is Seaman supposed to be floating upside-down?* This title doesn't exactly showcase the DC's awesome graphical power, but it's perfect for only children and kids who can't wait to grow up and play dating sims (thank you, Kodomo).





Dreamcast

Space Channel Five



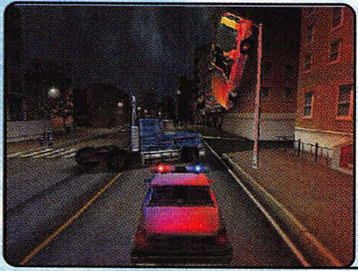
Developer
Sega

Publisher
Sega

Oh, la la... now this is a game! Forget Parappa and his ugly band of mutants—*Space Channel Five* features gorgeous women in 25th-century spandex! Sure, this might be a mere futuristic, musical version of "Simon Says," but you have to see the presentation to believe it. Killer music, sexy character design and Michael Jackson... this one's truly got it all! And believe it or not, *SC5*'s producer, Tetsuya Mizuguchi, also created the *Sega Rally* series... that's one strong portfolio! Now, give in to your urges and throw those lame rhythm action games out the window!







World's Scariest Police Chases

Developer
Developer

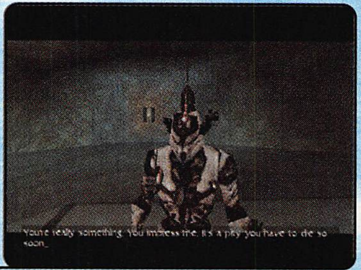
Publisher
Fox Interactive

Reality video gaming, a whole new concept in low brow entertainment! Well, not exactly; WSPC may be based on the popular FOX reality show but it will not be such a cheesy montage of high speed chases... It will be an interactive montage of cheesy car chases! Get behind the wheel of a black and white and chase down your very own perps. This game has been floundering in development for a while, but it looks as thought it is finally shaping up into a pretty cool title. Woo-hoo! Now where is my *Who Wants To Marry A Millionaire* game?





Omikron

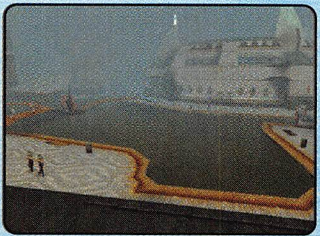


Developer
Quantic Dreams

Publisher
Eidos

"You wake in a body you do not know, in a city you have never seen..." This is how *Omikron*, the real time adventure game, opens. To unlock these mysteries you need to explore a massive world, inhabited by a multitude of denizens that you will need to use in your adventure. When you awoke in this strange land and body you found out that, upon dying each time thereafter, the next person to touch your corpse immediately becomes host to your soul. This very cool title will also include an original soundtrack with music supplied by David Bowie, who will also appear in the game. I hope Ziggy Stardust never touches my dead corpse... that is one body I can do without living in...







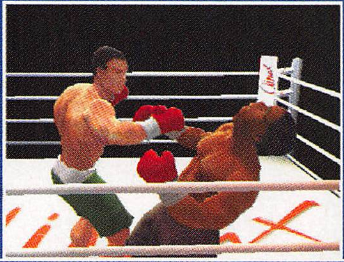
CAPCOM EDGE
TAKE IT TO THE EDGE
Slice. Dice. Chop. Skewer. All With One Amazing Tool!
Sega Dreamcast
PLASMA SWORD
In a war torn future, a new legion of agile warriors forms to unlock the new mysteries of Plasma Power and defeat the maniacal Dr. Bilstein and his army of terrorists. Enter Plasma Sword, the sequel to Capcom's critically acclaimed Star Gladiator. This futuristic 3-D fighter stars 22 surreal fighters with awe-inspiring moves, mind-bending combos and lightning fast gameplay. Plasma Sword – the all-in-one appliance that's a little slice of Heaven!
TEEN
T
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
Animated Violence
CAPCOM
WWW.CAPCOM.COM
84
2HIT COMBO
LEVEL 1
LEVEL 1
62
RAIN
LUCA
PRESS START BUTTON
LEVEL 1
LEVEL 0
Sega Dreamcast
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Climax comes out with Title Defense



Until now, British developer Climax has only been known for its countless conversions for major players like Konami and Electronic Arts. Just recently, however, the company announced its current PS2, Dreamcast, Dolphin and X-Box project, *Title Defense*. As you might have gathered, it's a boxing game in the vein of Midway's limited but fun *Ready 2 Rumble*. Climax is already claiming that its title will leave Midway's attempts in its wake, with four different individual game modes and spectacular attention to detail. Besides the de facto Exhibition and Practice modes, there'll be an intriguing Shadow mode, which will allow gamers to replay two-player games as single-player bouts (we're as confused as you are). The final mode is the Career mode, which should provide long-term gameplay challenge. Naturally, the 3D graphics will be state-of-the-art, and each fighter will be constructed of over 5000 polygons (realistic sweat, blood and rippling fat can't be far away... ugh), so the level of detail should be impressive. *Title Defense* is still very early in development, however; the game won't be out until 2001. Expect to see the game at E3 this year.





Seems Riot's been working overtime this month: Not only do we have first look at the newest soccer game to grace the console pitch but he also managed to dig up some exclusive interviews with both Fredrik Liliegren of Digital Illusions on their newest rally title (shocking... another rally title in the UK) and Peter Molyneux of Lionhead with the latest info on *Black and White* which is winging its way to Dreamcast in the very near future. Also, there's a first look at the initial boxing game for all major (future) platforms including Nintendo's Dolphin and PlayStation 2. Now, if only he could dig us up some info on that rumored sequel to *Spice World*—now that would be cool.



Ronaldo V Football Information

The European soccer championships take place this summer across Belgium and the Netherlands, and several publishers are dusting off their old soccer projects for release in the hopes of cashing in on the soccer craze. That in mind, I had low expectations of *Ronaldo V Football,* but after an extended session with a near-finished version, I was positively surprised by the sophisticated gameplay (despite the fact that it flowed very much like an arcade soccer game). The gifted Brazilian soccer player obviously plays a large part in the game's presentation, as many of Ronaldo's moves have been incorporated into the game (like his "airplane" goal celebration), but just how much input Ronaldo's had in the game is questionable.

Then again, considering Ronaldo's recent performance on the field, his limited involvement in game design could actually be a good thing... Still, *Ronaldo V Football* is an extremely promising game, with high production values that should make it stand out come this summer when European game shops will be overflowing with footy games.





Digital Illusions and Refractions team up

Few industries change as quickly as the interactive entertainment one... A few months back, GameFan visited Swedish developer Refractions to see its title *Battlefield* (which at the time was very early in development), yet recently, it was announced that Digital Illusions (which we just happened to talk to this month), another Swedish developer, had bought Refractions.

Fox Interactive's *Motorhead* is probably the only Digital Illusions title that rings a bell in U.S. gamers' heads, but in Europe, the team is legendary for producing the best Amiga and PlayStation pinball games, as well as an excellent hard-core platform game called *Benefactor*. The team's just putting the finishing touches on its latest game, *Rally Masters*, which is one of the most authentic (and fun!) rally sims ever produced—and as usual, the graphics in both the PC and PlayStation versions are superb. With DI's recent addition of Refractions, we should be seeing more diversity from the team—not just rally games, but RTS games, and even games aimed at the most hard-to-please gamer group: namely, the female species.

Q & A with Digital Illusions' CEO Fredrik Liliegren

GameFan: In recent years, DI has concentrated primarily on racing games, but a few years back, you had a variety of games in deve opment, like a shoot-'em-up an an action game like *Benefactor*. Are you currently developin games in these genres?

Fredrik Liliegren: Not thos specifically, but as you can se after buying Refraction Game we are also developing real-tim action strategy titles and game geared towards girls.

GF: Can you tell us abou *Hardcore*? It looked like it coul have been the ultimat Genesis/Megadrive shoot-'em-up

FL: *Hardcore* was a tremendous good Megadrive game, but, du to the quick demise of th Megadrive/Genesis market, neve was published. We will be mal ing the game, and an emulator t play it, available on our new wel site when it is launched th spring.

GF: Your latest title is the exceller *Rally Masters*. Are you using th *Motorhead* engine in the game?

FL: On PSX, yes, on PC, no. It is new engine on PC.

GF: What sort of research wa done for *Rally Masters*?

FL: Visiting a few different ra lies, buying and reading man rally books, watching video browsing the web extensivel talking to real-world rally driv ers about feel, etc.

GF: Are you worried about th competition that *Colin McRae* could present to *Rally Masters*?

FL: No, I think *Colin* should b worried about us!

GF: Has DI in general bee impressed by the PlayStation hardware?

FL: Yes, it is a very powerfu machine, but it will take som time to really use the power in good way. It's very much hacker machine, in the sens that it is more up to you hov things are done, thus th

European demo programming background should really give people like DICE an edge.

GF: Are you currently developing for the PlayStation 2?
FL: That is a secret... Let's say we are looking into it! :)

GF: Sega Europe is still fumbling with its Dreamcast Internet connectivity. Do you think Sony did the right thing by declining to offer out-of-the-box Internet capabilities with the PS2?
FL: Sony has a long-term strategy that is different from Sega, and it's not yet certain if the decision to not include in-box connectivity in Japan will be a mistake or the right choice. There is still the possibility that Sony will include connectivity in the box in the U.S. and Europe.



I, personally, do not like the idea of a diversified machine base, some with, some without certain hardware, as it creates problems for us developers. On that basis, I think it is in Sony's best interest to include connectivity from day 1!

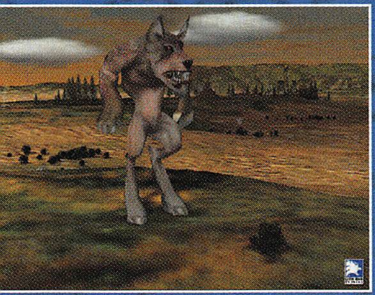
GF: Many developers that have previously worked only on PC have started to work on PlayStation 2 titles... Do you think developers will be jumping over to the X-Box bandwagon when the system becomes reality, and stop developing for PS2?
FL: No, they will develop games for both machines, as they are targeted at the same demographics, and are similar enough in performance to not make co-development a problem. I think some PC programmers will have a hard time with the complexity of the PS2, thus, they might choose for that reason to develop solely on X-Box.

GF: DI has extremely talented programmers. Why do you think Scandinavia is the home of so many good programmers, but few good designers?
FL: Both the C64 and the Amiga were very big in Scandinavia, and bred a whole lot of underground coders that had to learn themselves—thus, I think, giving them an edge over college-educated programmers when it comes to what we call cheating (i.e., creating an illusion of doing something very complex when in real life you are not).

GF: DI has teamed up with another Swedish developer, Refractions. Can you tell us how this happened, and what do you expect to gain by it?
FL: We bought Refractions because they had a similar mindset to game development as us, were very talented, and gave us a bigger size as a company, which gives us stability and flexibility—all needed in the expanding business we are in. It also tripled our market value on the Swedish stock exchange, so our investors seem to have liked the deal, as well.

GameFan would like to thank Fredrik Liliegren for his time and his insight.

Black and White Coming to Dreamcast!

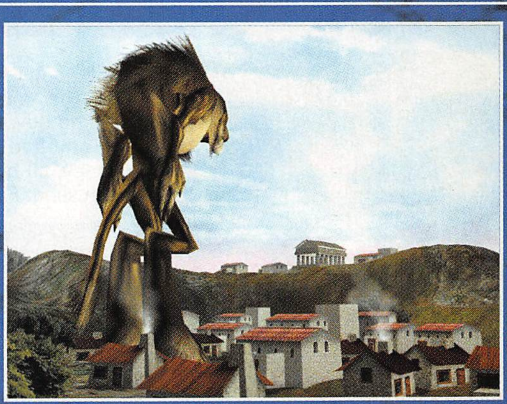


As revealed last month, *Black and White* is indeed being converted to Dreamcast for a late 2000 release. Now, both *Black and White* and *Half-Life* are PC conversions, but the developer and the publisher are going to great lengths to make sure that we don't get any quick cash-in ports like *Incoming* and *Suzuki Alstare Racing*, but proper conversions that take advantage of the power of the Dreamcast. Sadly, no shots of the Dreamcast version are available yet, but there should be almost no difference between the PC and Dreamcast visuals.

For those three people that have been living on a remote island for the past two years, *Black and White* is Lionhead's first game, and founder Peter Molyneyx is sticking to what he does best—the 'god genre' that he created while at Bullfrog, which he also set up years ago. *Black and White* is probably the most talked-about PC game of recent years, and nobody's going to be left out... There's not only a Dreamcast conversion in the works, but versions for Game Boy Color and PlayStation will also be released at some point... maybe even PlayStation 2.

Q & A with Lionhead director Peter Molyneux

GameFan: *Black and White* for the PC is still heavily in production. Are you confident that a Dreamcast version will be finished by the end of this year?
Peter Molyneux: Yes, we are working towards an October release, and definitely before this Christmas. The conversion is being handled by Krisalis, an external conversions house. Lionhead is very involved in the design of the game, but Krisalis Software is doing the actual conversion. We worked with them when I was at Bullfrog on a number of conversions of *Theme Park* and *Magic Carpet*, and were pleased with how these turned out, so I think the Dreamcast conversion is in very safe hands. Lionhead will never do conversions in-house, although it will always be very hands-on with design issues. We are only twenty people, and everyone's needed to work on original games.



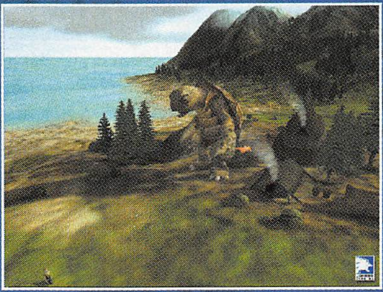
GF: Isn't Lionhead worried about Sega's Dreamcast network structure, which is as of yet untested when it comes to massive multi-player games?
PM: Well, the obvious answer is that 56K will never be enough. We all need and wish for more bandwidth, but converting *B&W* PC to DC has been made much easier with Sega's support. There are many aspects of the game that require close attention, specifically: saving games and object locations, town and villager states, creature stats, your opponent's creature stats, dynamic mid-game entry, and so on... However, the ping times from the European server have been excellent in tests, and we're working with a clean operating system, so unlike Windows, there isn't much going on in the background. Every aspect of the PC multi-player experience is coming over to Dreamcast, including the ultra-cool Gathering. We're making no compromises.

GF: Will all the advanced technical features of the PC version be included in the Dreamcast version?
PM: Yes, absolutely—see above!

GF: The console playing audience is quite different from the majority of PC players. Will this necessitate some changes into Black and White's game structure on the Dreamcast?
PM: Well, in fact, the PC version of *Black & White* was inspired by the consoles, as I have always enjoyed playing console games. The truth of the matter is that Bullfrog got channelled into producing PC games, and one of things I wanted to change at Lionhead was for us to be able to make amazing console games. In fact, *Black & White* will probably be the last PC lead format game from Lionhead.

GF: Will the Dreamcast version offer the same quality network playability as the PC version?
PM: That's what we are aiming for.

GF: A huge online community is expected for Black and White. Will both the PC and DC version players be able to play against/with each other online?
PM: No. It would be great if this could happen, and maybe something to aim for in the future, but not with *Black & White*.

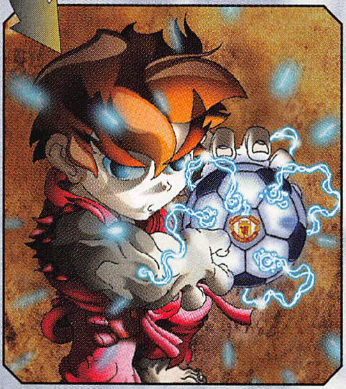


GameFan would like to thank Peter Molyneux for his time and his input.

Japan Now!

Japan Now is brought to you by Kodomo

Tokyo Game Show!



As we were putting this issue to bed, resident soccer fanatic Kodomo phoned in this quick report, straight from the Tokyo Game Show in Japan. While he won't make it back in time to share all his goodies for this issue, we



Fantavision

were able to get his first impressions of the Spring TGS...

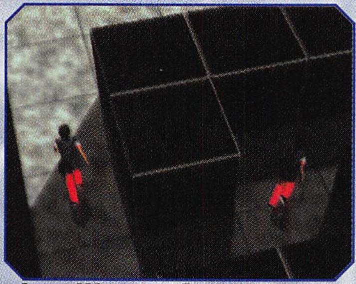
The first words out of his mouth were, "Sega's dominating the show." Score one for the underdogs. Apparently, Sony and Nintendo had a very minor presence, with no surprises and very few games worth mentioning, while Sega had the best lineup and the most promising titles coming down the pipe.

Sony had only four games on display, all of which have already been seen: *Fantavision*, *Intelligent*



Fantavision

Qube Remix, *TVDJ*, and *Spyro 2* for the original PlayStation (new to Japan, not new to us). *Fantavision*, *IQ Remix*, and *Spyro 2* are already on store shelves, while *TVDJ* (formerly known as *Be On Edge*) was playable at the



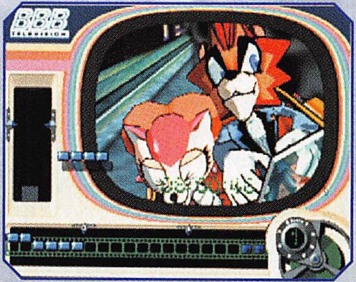
Intelligent Qube Remix

Sony PlayStation festival last month. It's shocking that Sony had nothing new, especially considering the recent launch of its new system... and now PS2 owners have only one game to look



TVDJ

forward to? *TVDJ* is a puzzle/music game which combines cool tunes with fast thinking, as you figure out how many notes you need to drop in a measure, so you don't break the meas-



TVDJ

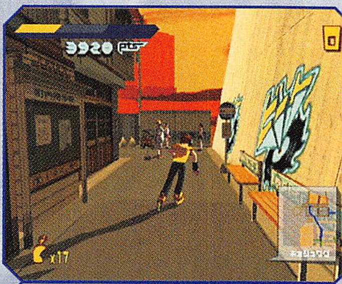
ure bar (that's the best explanation I can give in a sentence).

Square, the 2000 lb. gorilla in Sony's corner, had a disappointing showing as well, far from earning the top banana. A measly three games were playable—*Driving Emotion Type-S*, *Gekikukan Professional Baseball*, and *All Star Pro Wrestling*—all of which we'd seen previously. The baseball and wrestling games featured some amazing motion capture and stunning visuals for their



Jet Set Radio

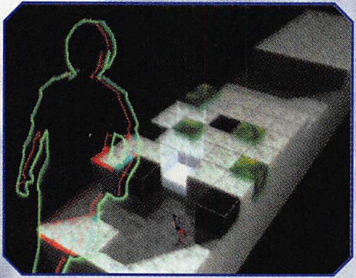
genres. The majority of the tal surrounding Square's booth was n't about what was playable... bu rather, what wasn't—*Fina Fantasy IX* for PS and *Bouncer* fo PS2. Both games were onl shown in short video clips, an *FFIX* showed no gamepla footage. This should be rathe unsettling for Square fans, con sidering *FFIX* is scheduled to b







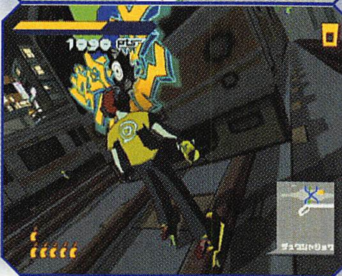
Fantavision



Intelligent Qube Remix



TVDJ



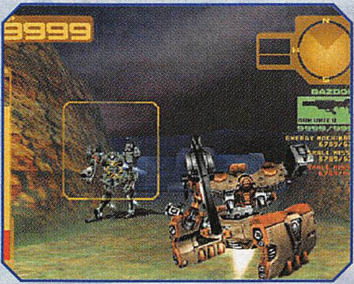
Jet Set Radio



Jet Set Radio



Phantasy Star Online



Armored Core 2



Armored Core 2

eleased in a few months and *Bouncer* was playable at last ear's TGS (six months ago).

The game Kodomo kept raving bout was *Jet Set Radio.* We can't rint his exact words, but... let's ust say he was **very** excited. He



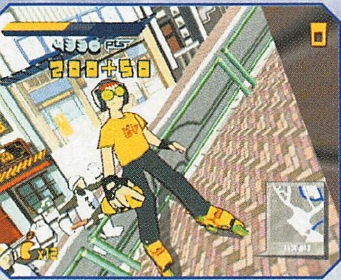
Jet Set Radio

lubbed it "the most original ame in a long time." Your goal? o skate around town, pick up pray paint cans, and tag walls. ventually, somebody will call the olice, which forces you to skate



Jet Set Radio

way. The details are a bit ketchy, but Kodomo made it ound like the actual tagging is ontrolled by moving the d-pad in he direction you're instructed, ike *Parappa.* Comparing it to *VDJ*, Kodomo said *Jet Set* was nore fun because you're actually ontrolling more of the game. My ersonal favorite, *Samba de Amigo*, looked "really good" on



Jet Set Radio

the Dreamcast and garnered large crowds with its maraca-swinging, toe-tapping, easy-to-learn gameplay (are you listening, Sega of America??).

At last, the RPGs are out in force on the Dreamcast! *Grandia 2*, GameArts' monsterpiece, looked "impressive," though it was only shown in video form. *Phantasy Star Online* looked "really good" and will be released simultaneously in Japan, the U.S., and



Phantasy Star Online

Europe sometime this year. Gamers all over the world will be able to play together, with up to four simultaneously, and people from foreign countries can communicate via symbols or instantly



Phantasy Star Online

translated typed phrases. The game was shown in video form, with four separate monitors showing the individual display for each of four party members (one



Phantasy Star Online

of the screens was even in English!). Together, the party went off and fought the dragon shown in these screenshots.

Eternal Arcadia was yet another high-profile RPG which wowed attendees, and Kodomo picked up a playable disc, so you can look forward to a full preview next issue. As first reported in our December issue last year, Capcom's DC RPG, *El Dorado Gate*, will be released in multiple chapters over the course of several months. With character designs by Yoshitaka Amano, this one looks like another must-have for RPG nuts. Unfortunately, the game's only presence was a single picture on a wall at the show.

Capcom's other titles included *Marvel vs. Capcom 2* (see elsewhere this issue), *Power Stone 2* for DC, and *BioHazard Zero* for



Power Stone 2

Nintendo 64. *PS2* was playable on a Dreamcast linked to an arcade game, and this game looked amazing. *Bio Hazard Zero* (that's *Resident Evil* for us) looks as good as *Resident Evil 2* on the N64 and was described as "visually on par with *RE3* for PS." The game was playable, with you running around a train level as Rebecca.

Another noteworthy game was Enix's *Dragon Quest VII* for the PlayStation, which is now sched-



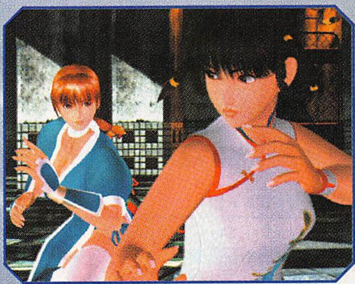
Power Stone 2

uled to come out by the time you have grandchildren. The game has topped Japanese Most Wanted lists for so long that there were long lines to play, and Kodomo didn't have time to check it out on the first day. *Armored Core 2* for PS2 had a high framerate (around 60 frames) and the character models looked fabu-



Armored Core 2

lous, with lots of polys, but he described the game as not looking as clean or fluid as *Virtual On: Oratorio Tangram* for DC. *Rent-A-Hero* looked like "a stock DC game;" while *Napple Tale, Dee*



Dead or Alive 2

Dee Planet, and *Cool Cool Tunes* (a dance game) all looked pretty cool. Namco's *Tekken Tag Tournament* and Tecmo's *DoA2* were also there for PS2. We'll be back next month with the full scoop, straight from the soccer player's mouth. **Eggo & Kodomo**



Tekken Tag Tournament

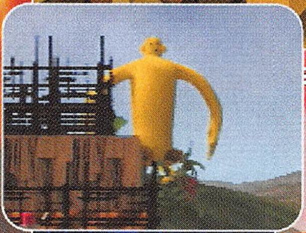


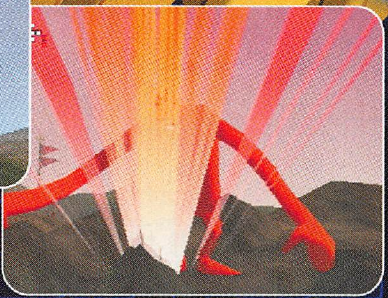
Imports

Reviews







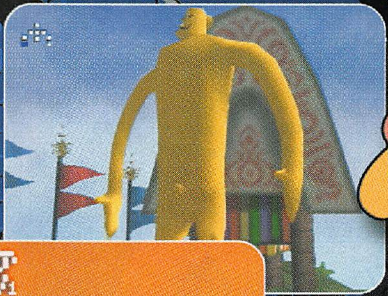


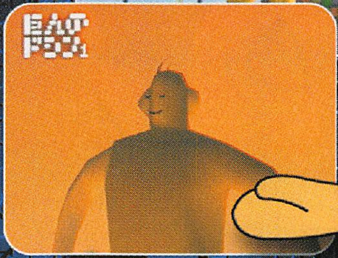
David Copperfield, Siegfried and Roy, Lance Burton: They might be world famous magicians capable of making the impossible possible (the Statue of Liberty... jeez, I can hardly see it behind those enormous mirrors), but can they import a Nintendo 64DD? And you, well, you might be the only kid on your block with an import PS2—but how 'bout being the only kid in your state with a 64DD? It sounds crazy, huh? Well, it is, and for one main reason—why in the world would any sane gamer want a 64DD (hard-core collectors aside)? Thanks to the hi-res graphics and Internet play of the Expansion Pak and Interact's Shark Wire (available in the U.S.), the DD can no longer sell itself on those points. Furthermore, the idea of an internal clock may be appealing, but is it really worth spending $199-plus for a mere add-on? The majority of the world's gamers would likely answer with a resounding "no," and NCL certainly knew it would be so. Ultimately, it was pride that drove Yamauchi to finally deliver the phantom hardware in Japan, and a complete lack of seratonin and other necessary brain fluids that drove ECM and I on a near-endless quest to own the unit... though he wound up fronting the bill. Hey, I offered to pay for shipping!

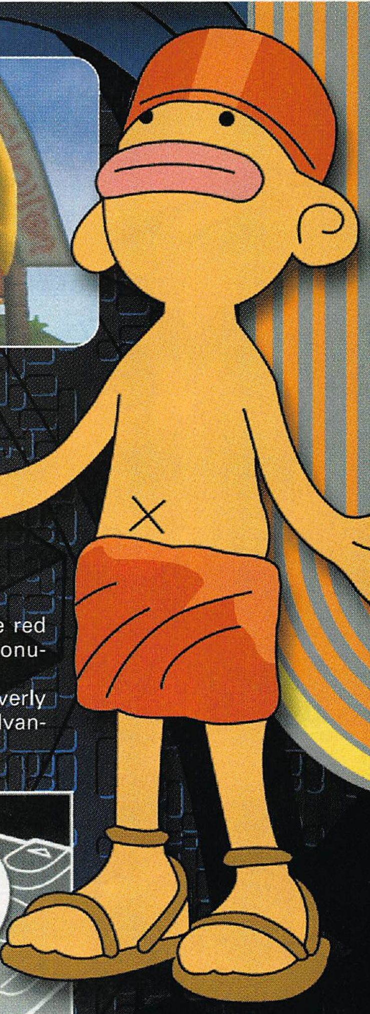
At the time of the DD's release, there were just two games available: *Mario Artist* and *Doshin the Giant*. The former was basically Nintendo's answer to Photoshop, but the latter was truly the title that fueled our interest. *Doshin*, from Kazutoshi Iida (the creator of *Tail of the Sun* on the PlayStation), is an extremely unusual title, if not the strangest Nintendo game to date. Appreciating its unique world requires a serious time commitment (as did *Tail of the Sun)*. The game's many goals aren't exactly cut and dried. In fact, the only aspect that seems at all straightforward is the game's objective of elevating the local natives to an advanced civilized state.

How Doshin—a yellow giant showcasing about as much bodily detail as a three-year-old's drawing

of "Big Bird"—happened upon this tropical land is uncertain... What is certain, though, is his ability to manipulate his surroundings. With the push of a button, Doshin can uproot trees, grab hold of the land and literally shape mountains out of a flat surface (or vice versa). At the beginning, players must explore the island, using those basic commands, and eventually, Doshin will discover territory suitable for the creation of a distinct village. The game's based heavily on trial and error, but the amount of in-game text (delivered primarily by *Doshin*'s resident witch doctor) can overwhelm new players—including myself. Still, I set forth, shrouded in a veil of mystery (otherwise known as the Japanese language), intent on creating the earth's first Fury-inspired colony.







O.K., so you have to get your feet a bit damp to understand the game's dynamics—but once you do, you'll uncover a ton of unusual and strangely addictive facets. For example: With the press of the right trigger, Doshin can switch from a sweet, mild-mannered giant to a red-skinned menace with evil intentions. You can choose to spend the majority of the game (if not the entire game) as the wicked Doshin or the good Doshin, but the real challenge is in finding a proper balance between the two. The reason for this symmetry's simple: Like Kazutoshi's previous PS effort, *Doshin* was crafted around principles of action and consequence (not unlike *Shen Mue* or the upcoming *Munch's Oddysee*... though the two incorporate a much deeper sense of reality). Playing the game strictly as the red Doshin will inevitably lead to a strained relationship with the island natives, and in turn, the monuments they would normally build to honor a fair and caring Doshin will go unbuilt.

Yes, maintaining Doshin's status as island deity requires carefully planned actions. Act overly friendly, and the squeaking inhabitants will attempt to take advantage of your kindness... Remember, the busy, hard-working natives are Doshin's favorites. They'll not only craft elaborate icons, they'll also reward Doshin with heart and skull emblems he can use to make him grow. Once his growth meter's full, the yellow (or red—you meanie!) giant will grow in size. A larger body will make traversing the countryside easier and faster, but Doshin also runs the risk of squashing villagers, statues, etc. To make matters even more interesting, only a large Doshin can fend off deadly weather systems (tornadoes, heavy rain), fire and thieving monsters that pose a threat to him and the villagers.



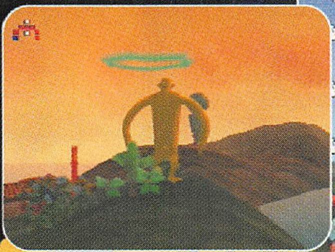




Truthfully, there are so many little odds and ends to *Doshin the Giant* (things like the internal clock, which, though your game might be shut off, can still cause a number of dilemmas for the giant and his devoted villagers) that an entire section of the mag would be needed to encompass them all. Sadly, due to the DD's nonexistence in the United States and its near nonexistence in Japan (hmm, do I buy age-old hardware or the cutting-edge PS2... *Doshin* or *Ridge Racer V*... tough questions, eh?), it's a good bet that most gamers couldn't care less. The DD doesn't even offer enhanced graphical performance (visually, *Doshin* resembles a first-generation N64 cart), and that alone's a tough sell on any continent. Remember, though: A great game's only as strong as its play mechanics, and *Doshin* certainly delivers in that department. Now, I'd usually end this type of review by suggesting you hit up your nearest import shop for a 64DD. But you aren't going to find one... so enjoy these pics and keep dreaming.



Fury's excited that more Doshin games will follow, but fears ECM will charge a ridiculous rental fee. Who's acting like an evil giant now?





VIEWPOINT SCORE :90	DEVELOPER - PARAM PUBLISHER - NCL	1 PLAYER AVAILABLE NOW JAPAN	FURY: AH, TO RULE WITH AN IRON FIST... BUT NO MONUMENTS?

R REVIEW







GUNBIRD 2

ガンバード2

R REVIEW ECM: More, please...	Developer - Psikyo	1-2 Players	Viewpoint Score: 90
	Publisher - Capcom	Available Now Japan	

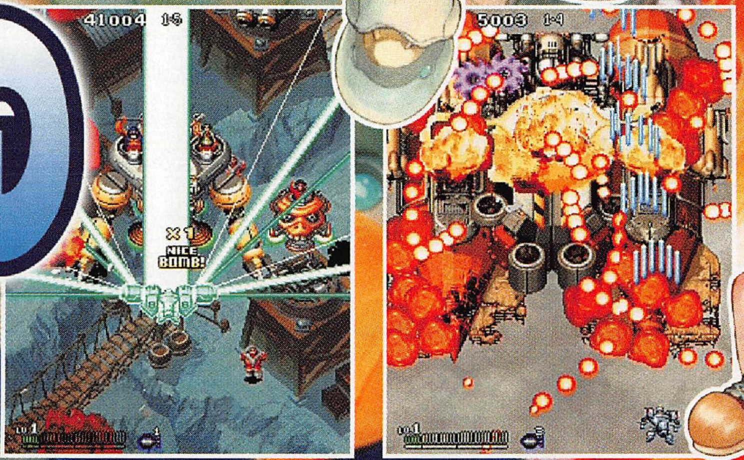
Little Johnny Black-n-Blue

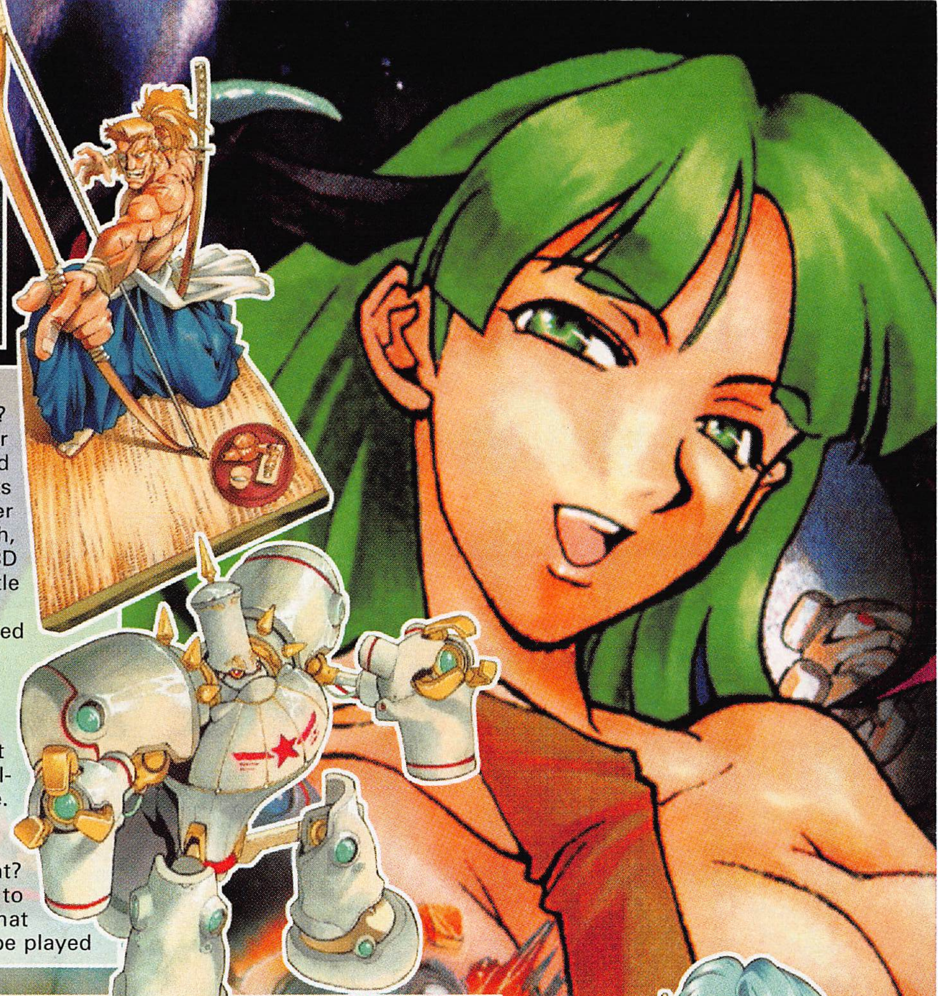
"What is this—another scrolling shoot-'em-up on Dreamcast?!? Wow, do people actually still play these lame-ass things? I remember when every other game released on Genesis was a shooter. Man, did I ever get sick of them... I mean, what kind of Cro-Magnon still wants to play these things—different graphics, same game, zzzzzz. I'd rather play me some *Tomb Raider IV*, or that new *Ridge Racer* game... oh, and some *Tekken* too—now **those** are games. And it's not even in 3D <snicker>! Who's going to waste their time and money on this little piece of s—" <thud>—*cue stars and little birdies...*

–anonymous shopper at a local import retailer, just as ECM walked in to pick up his copy of *Gunbird 2*.

Do Not Adjust Your Magazine

O.K., the first thing you're inevitably thinking is that somebody at the printer really screwed up this time. After all, nobody in their right mind lays out pages *sideways*, right? Wrong. I wanted to amply illustrate that *Gunbird 2* is meant to be played



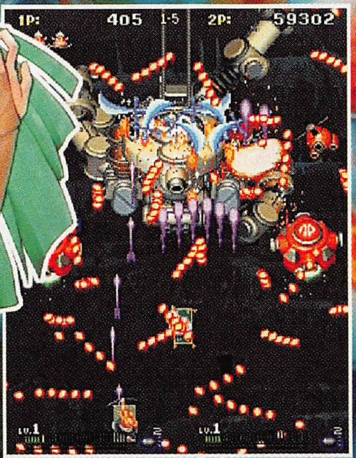


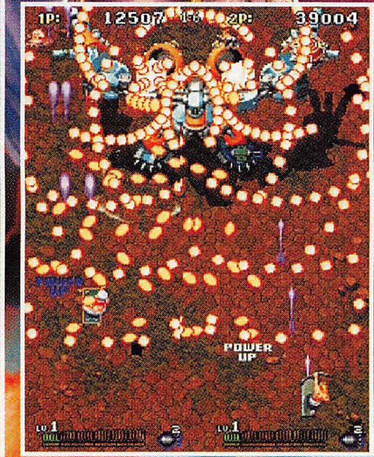
this way—on its side, or rather, with your TV on its side, and *GB2* running in its proper aspect ratio (i.e., the screen should be taller than it is wide). Now that we've put that little piece of business behind us, I feel a bit of a rant coming on... brace yourselves.

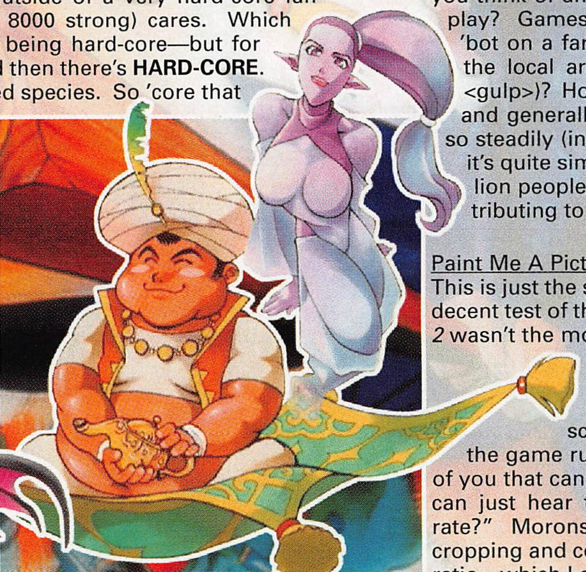
Alone... So Alone...

If you happened to glance across my *Strider 2* review earlier in the issue (shame on you if you didn't immediately commit it to memory—now go back, and do it at once, we'll wait for you), you may have noted that I'm not altogether thrilled about how our Japanese brothers and sisters have received certain games of late. *Strider 2*'s sales were anemic, while *Gunbird 2*'s were horrific—8,000 sales in Week One. Again, I'd love to blame it on the release of the PS2, but get real—this game simply failed to sell because almost no one outside of a very hard-core fan base (which is apparently about 8000 strong) cares. Which would be fine—after all, it's nice being hard-core—but for the fact that there's hard-core, and then there's **HARD-CORE**. So 'core that you're an endangered species. So 'core that while you used to get a new 'shmup' (shoot-'em-up) every three weeks, you're lucky if you see one every three months anymore—which is about the current release rate, if *Gradius 3 & 4* (PS2) make it out on time <sigh>. Anyway, what does this have to do with my review of *Gunbird 2?* Well, namely, this...













A Gamer Magnet

Whenever a new shooter comes into the building, I conduct a little test. If it's an arcade board, I plug it into the handy arcade cab located right next to my office. If it's a console game, I set it up in the bullpen, and watch as all the staffers of both GameFan Magazine and GF Online flock to it like Eggo to minors. It's altogether uncanny... No other genre of games has this sort of drawing power on a staff full of jaded cynics. Why? Well, can you think of another type of game that **is** the ultimate in pick-up-and-play? Games where the only real foe is yourself—not some lame 'bot on a faraway computer, or some gangster-type hoodlum at the local arcade (and we have both in residence here at GF <gulp>)? How can such a random bunch of dilettantes, PC-heads and generally 'been there, done that' types of gamers gravitate so steadily (indeed, seemingly without fail) to such a game? Well, it's quite simple, really: These games are **still** fun. Sadly, a few million people seem to have forgotten that fact in recent years, thus contributing to the slow, painful demise of the shmup scene...

Paint Me A Picture

This is just the second shooter to appear on DC, so it's probably a halfway decent test of the hardware's 2D power. The only problem is that *Gunbird 2* wasn't the most graphically impressive shooter, even in arcades—heck, it's not even on par with the best Saturn games (which isn't saying too much, I hope). Its colors are respectable (though there's a bit of dithering), tons of sprites cram the screen with nary a shred of slowdown (and no flicker), and the game runs at a fairly brisk pace. It's also arcade-perfect, for those of you that can't sleep at night without the earth-shattering little details (I can just hear the questions rumbling around: "But what's the frame-rate?" Morons...). Just remember, to get the full effect (without some cropping and compressing), you must play the game in its original aspect ratio—which I officially do not condone, so if you drop your bloody TV on your friend's foot, don't come crying to me.

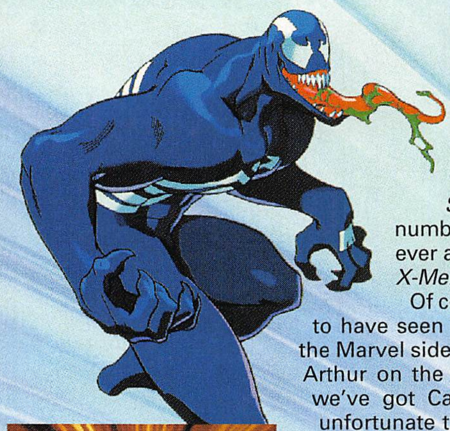
Girlfriend? What Girlfriend?

Now, I'm not sure if I liked *Gunbird 2* so much just because it's a new shooter (as the old saying goes, someone dying of thirst in the desert, yadda yadda yadda) or because it's a genuinely incredible game, but one thing's for sure: It's eaten up nearly every spare second of my time for the past week and a half. I've lost whole days after Eggo or Fury asked me to come over and play a couple of rounds with them. If someone didn't tap me on the shoulder and tell me that it was time to go home (namely, the janitor, at 7 o' clock... the next morning), I may never have come out the first day. And that's about as strong an endorsement as I can make for a game.

Careening through *GB2*'s bullet-choked screens and dancing with death at nearly every turn is probably a pretty good litmus test for actual gaming skill. I'd love to see someone try and waltz through this one without continuing. After all, it's not enough just to beat a shooter (how hard is it to keep pressing 'Start' and continuing over and over?)—the truly skilled must beat it on one credit.

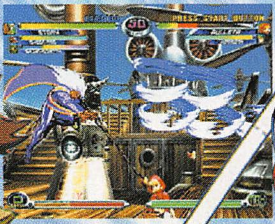
Coming to America?

Alas, this is where things get hazy... Capcom published both *Giga Wing* and *Gunbird 2*, and I'd like to say that it's a sure thing that it'll make it out over here. The only problem is that the decision will probably depend largely on *Giga Wing*'s sales here—and *Giga Wing*'s only half the shmup that this one is. I guess I'll have to do my part and buy a game that I don't like to help insure that we get the newer one... you should too! **ECM**



Imagine you're Capcom, maker of hit game after hit game, and you've just released *Marvel Vs. Capcom*, which is a huge success (far more than expected). Now, where do you go from there? I'll tell you where: Grab that hyper-crazy-funky-fresh gameplay and throw it back on the drawing board—only this time, take it to the limit with more characters, more speed, more special effects and, best of all, Sega's Dreamcast-based NAOMI hardware.

O.K., back to the real Capcom... This game maker's never content with ho-hum brawlers, and it always delivers. *MVC2* is no exception; it blows the high watermark set by *SFA3* out of the water. *SFA3* initially raised the bar with its thirty-plus characters, but *MVC2* nearly doubles that number with a total of fifty-six playable fighters. Every Marvel or Capcom character that's ever appeared in the series is in the mix—every one present and accounted for, from *X-Men: Children of the Atom* on.



Of course, some of us would've liked to have seen Thor, The Thing and Ultron on the Marvel side and maybe Trojan, Lou and Arthur on the Capcom side. But at least we've got Cable, Jill and SonSon. It's unfortunate that Capcom wasted its time with useless—or should I say, unpopular—characters like Dan (of *Street Fighter Alpha*), Omega Red and Silver Samurai. Removing cheese-master Wolverine would've been really nice, too... Hey, the only super-hero lineup that could impress me would be *Marvel Vs. DC*.





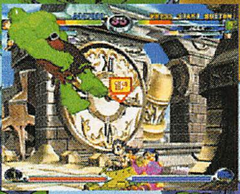




But before we see Batman battling it out against Cyclops, rest assured that we'll battle it out in style with *MVC2*. Never has a Capcom fighter looked this clean... sorry, *SFIII*, it's about time you stepped aside. *MVC2*'s NAOMI-driven backgrounds are unparalleled—and leave it to Capcom to use 2D sprites in tandem with taboo polys! Both 2D and 3D work really well in *MVC2*, from its characters to its backgrounds and its foregrounds with backgrounds. Many of its stages are predominantly 3D with hand-drawn foregrounds. One features moving gears, another is set against the setting sun







with a beautiful cloud formation, and yet another stage places you in the depths of an underground ice cavern, with plenty of convincing textures and lighting.

The final battle versus Abyss is also amazing; a psychedelic vortex swirls and gyrates around it like something out of *Maken X*. Its character animation is better than the standard CPSII fare we've become accustomed to, but it's nowhere near as fluid as that of *SFIII*. Everyone 'round the cave noticed some slight pixelation on the sprites.











R REVIEW	Cerberus: SNK Vs. Capcom has a tough act to follow.	Developer - Capcom Publisher - Capcom	1 Player Available Now Japan	Viewpoint Score: 90







Jagged edges aren't obvious throughout, but they do seem more prevalent on certain backgrounds, like Amingo's cactus-filled desert stage. Still, jaggies aside, every character looks fantastic.

They even sound fantastic, with sound effects for special attacks, Supers and taunts. It's too bad the music is putrid... No more character themes, no more fast-paced thumpin' tunes in this game; instead, the *soup du jour* is some strange jazzy noise that just doesn't fit the action. Yes, Capcom's really stuck it to us in the music department. Just thank the fighting gods that *MVC2*'s gameplay hasn't suffered the same evil fate.

After fourteen years, Capcom has finally given up the six-button convention and simplified gameplay to four attack buttons and two "special" buttons. Medium attacks have been all but done away with; they'll only occur when the Weak attack button is pressed twice rapidly and the Weak attack connects with an opponent (blocked or not). If you're playing as Venom, you'll need to get right next to your opponent to execute a throw and really launch him/her.

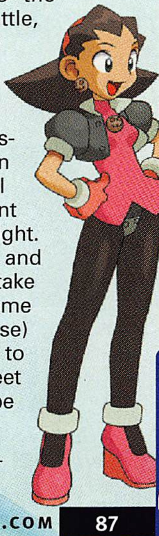


As far as teams go, each one now consists of three fighters that are fully interchangeable and playable. The two fighters on the sidelines can step in temporarily at any time, or switch entirely with the current fighter. In EX form, Supers can be cancelled with one another—not with the same character, mind you, but with teammates. So if Morrigan's performing her Soul Eraser, Spider-Man can easily drop in with a Maximum Spider and chain to yet another Super. If *that's* too much trouble, well, pressing the two Special attack buttons (L and R default) will cause every available fighter to perform his or her

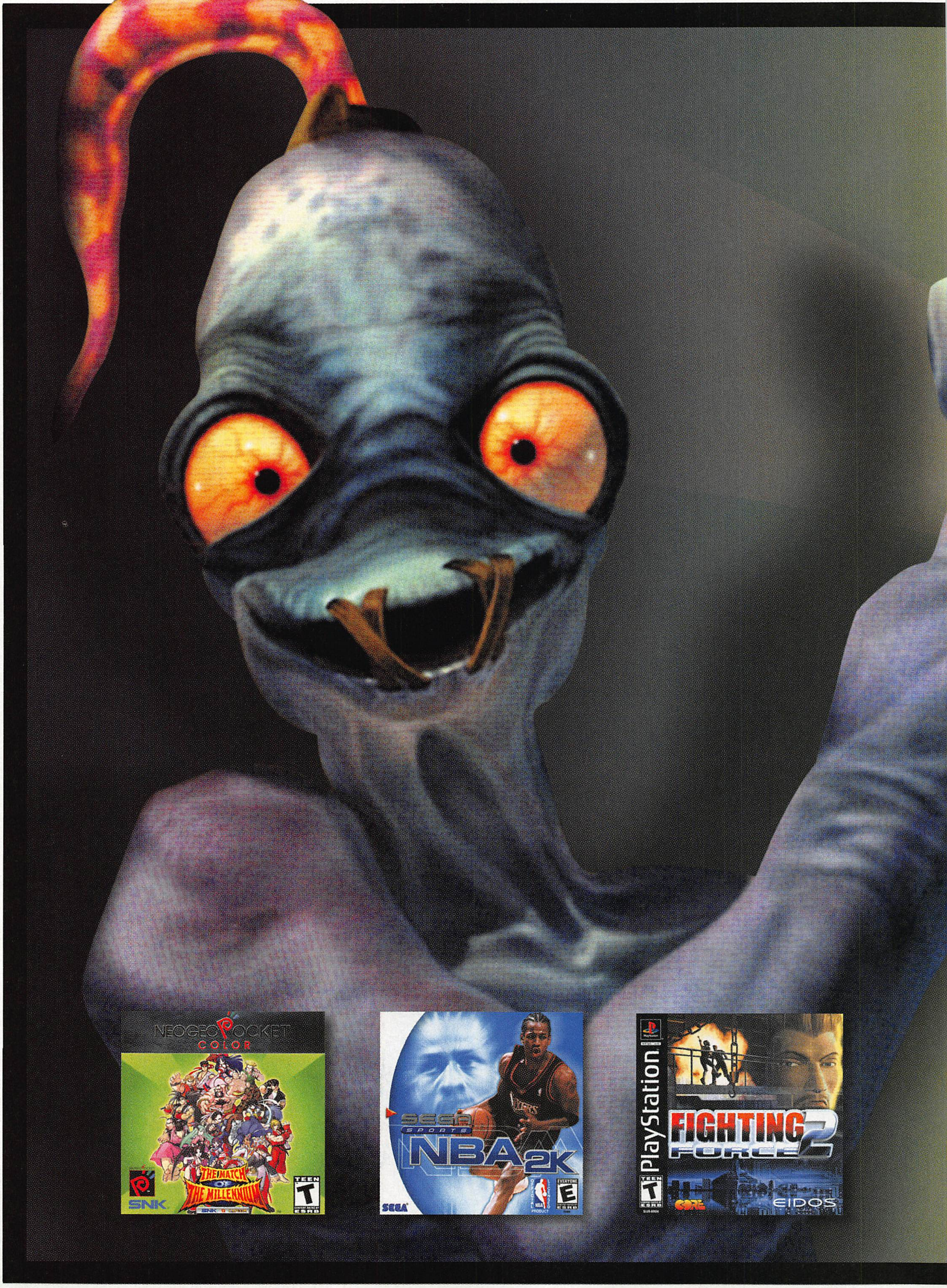


Super simultaneously (but will eat up as many as three levels of the Super gauge). It's really crazy, once you get into it... Fortunately, a lot of what made a given character cheap before is *kaput*; Capcom's done a really great job of learning from its mistakes.

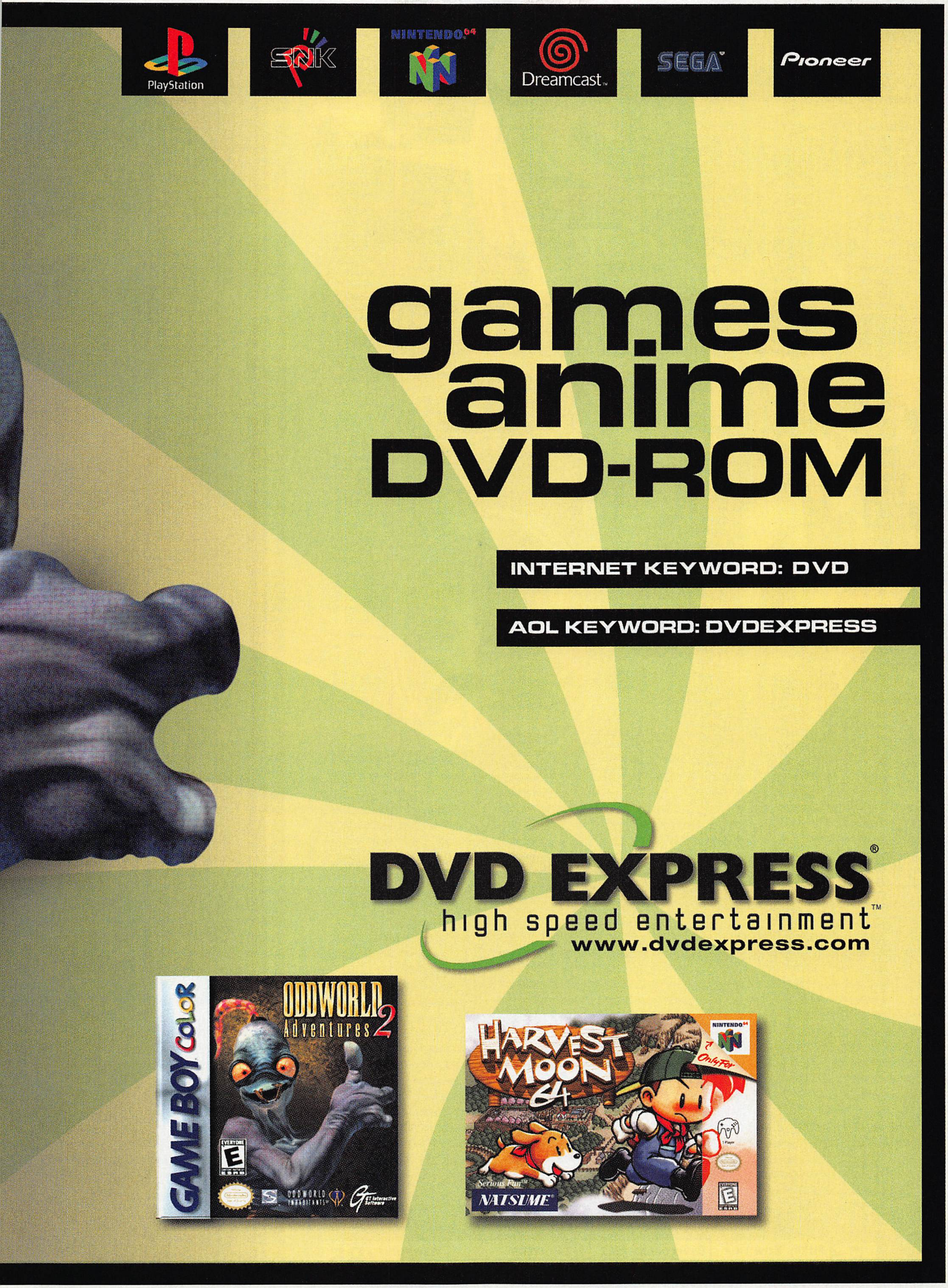
For the last few years, the almost decade-old CPSII hardware has been the exclusive home of Capcom's *Versus* series—until now, that is. Sega's ever-powerful NAOMI board plays host to the newest crossover battle, and, as much as I love CPSII games, I'd say Capcom's found a good second home. *MVC2* is much more accessible on NAOMI, more fun to play, and is loaded with all the fluffy goodness that makes us want to play until the late hours of the night. Sure, the cheese factor's skyrocketed, and the music's awful, but who cares? We take the bad with the good. Yeah, the game could easily have scored 100 (or at least close) if it weren't for the soundtrack. *MVC2* is still a very good game, though... Say goodbye to the overpriced and underpowered board that is CPSII, and while you're at it, greet NAOMI—she's a lovely girl. And don't worry if you miss her this time around; she'll be back this summer with something special called *SNK Vs. Capcom.*



Cerberus next wants to see GameFan Vs. Every Other Magazine.



NEOGEO POCKET
COLOR
THE MATCH OF THE MILLENNIUM
SNK
TEEN
T
ESRB
SEGA SPORTS
NBA 2K
SEGA
EVERYONE
E
ESRB
PlayStation
FIGHTING FORCE 2
EIDOS


PlayStation
SNK
NINTENDO64
Dreamcast
SEGA
Pioneer
games
anime
DVD-ROM
INTERNET KEYWORD: DVD
AOL KEYWORD: DVDEXPRESS
DVD EXPRESS®
high speed entertainment™
www.dvdexpress.com
GAME BOY COLOR
ODDWORLD Adventures 2
HARVEST MOON 64
NATSUME



Unlike some, I don't cry foul when the Windows CE logo boots up on my Dreamcast. Remember a little known DC game called *Sega Rally 2*? Windows CE and all, this was an AWESOME game, hardly hindered by the dreaded, diabolical, malicious CE operating system. Needless to say, I was far from surprised when the familiar white screen made its prelude to one of the best arcade and home console light-gun shooters to date. *Virtua Cop 2* on the DC might leave much to be desired in terms of its graphics, but the gameplay's completely intact. Simply put, if you're starved for a follow-up to the amazing *House of the Dead 2*, your money will be well spent on the boys (and girl) in virtua blue. For a measly $30, the justice shot has never looked sweeter.

First off, understand that *VC2* might never see a US release (it would basically be a matter of too little, too late). Dated graphics and the fact that this is a PC port of an old Saturn game just won't help it win points with SOA executives. They're a finicky lot, and if they passed on bringing *VOOT* stateside (Activision should be commended for localizing that masterpiece) what do you think the odds are of *VC2* hitting US shores? Perhaps as a competitively priced light gun collection (along with the original *HOTD*), but painfully unlikely as a stand-alone DC release.

Ok, so the rumors of extra poly counts held about as much truth as *HOTD* being an extra feature in *HOTD2*, but so what? It's a near duplicate of the Model 2 arcade piece. Arcade collectors will revel in the nostalgia, light gun fanatics will kill for an opportunity to hone their trigger finger of death, and all else will shake their heads in disappointment. Sure, more could have been done—much more—but the same holds true for *Soul Reaver*, *Tony Hawk*, and most other DC ports. Remember, as a $30 *Generations* game *VC2* works, but on the heels of the ultra powerful PS2, Sega is sadly doing everything but wowing audiences. Million dollar deals with Swatch can only take the swirling super console so far. More games of *Shen Mue*, *Dead or Alive 2* and *Makken X* caliber need to surface, and NOW! U.S. gamers might be buying into half-assed ports, but as soon as the PS2 hits America, clean textures and a solid frame rate won't mean squat.

Wow, what a rant... at least it saves me money on a therapy bill. Now what were we discussing again? Aah, *VC2*. Well, if you've never played *VC* here's the basics: Bad guys are causing terrible disorder and only you can restore justice... by slaughtering each and every one of them and leaving their children fatherless. The game offers two modes of play: *VC1* and *VC2* mode. The difference is extremely slight and basically entails varying point systems, sights and a new blue damage flash (found in *VC2*). The option screen as well offers a ranking system and gun select that allows for more powerful weapons (shotgun, rifle etc.) to be equipped on the fly...no code this time around!

It's likely that most publications and gamers will undoubtedly dog *Virtua Cop 2*. While it's an old game that does little to utilize the raw power of the DC, it's also a killer light gun game full of intense action and quality gameplay... even if it's a far cry from what you'd expect on a 128-bit console. Look past the first generation Model 2 visuals and join the few, the proud, the men and women of *Virtua City*.

Fury still wonders why Sega dropped the ball on Dreamcast backwards compatibility...



R REVIEW	FURY: NOW THIS IS RETRO GAMING!	DEVELOPER - AM2 / PUBLISHER - SEGA	1-2 PLAYERS / AVAILABLE NOW JAPAN	VIEWPOINT SCORE: 85

AERO DANCING F









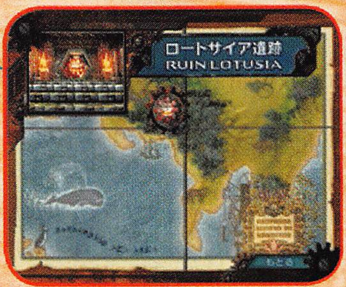
I must admit that I have about as much interest in flying sims as I do in listening to Fury wax on about the reasons why he originally fitted his silver Honda with glowing bronze rims <cringe>. Despite this, *Aero Dancing F,* CRI's second foray into the largely PC-based flight simulation genre, has grown on me... Maybe it's the amazing graphics, or the new missions that actually allow you to blow things out of the sky—or perhaps it's the ability to pass tests with a menial score of 61 (and I thought my grade school days had come and gone...).

With seven maps, more camera options than necessary and a virtual arsenal of planes, there's enough to satisfy even the most diehard flight sausage out there... Throw in the standard missions, training and a free flight mode, and you'll develop some appreciation for it. Unfortunately, that's about the limit of the game's appeal. It's decidedly a sim, and NOT an arcade game (read: "Those looking for *Ace Combat* DC need not apply"). But if the thrill of performing Immelmans ad nauseam and the prioritization of technical procedure over explosions is your forte, you won't be disappointed. K

Viewpoint Score	Developer / Publisher	Players / Availability	Kodomo	
:87	Developer - CRI	1-2 Players	Kodomo:	Review
	Publisher - CRI	Available Now Japan	Loop Garou...	

Dreamcast

トレジャーストライク TREASURE STRIKE







Imagine merging Capcom's *Spawn: In the Demon's Hand* and *Power Stone* with four-player capability... Sounds fantastic, doesn't it? But in the hands of KID, the concoction suffers from 'entertainment envy.' The final product is a third-person battle game with multiple opponents, each searching locked chests for treasure and using said booty to buy weapon upgrades.

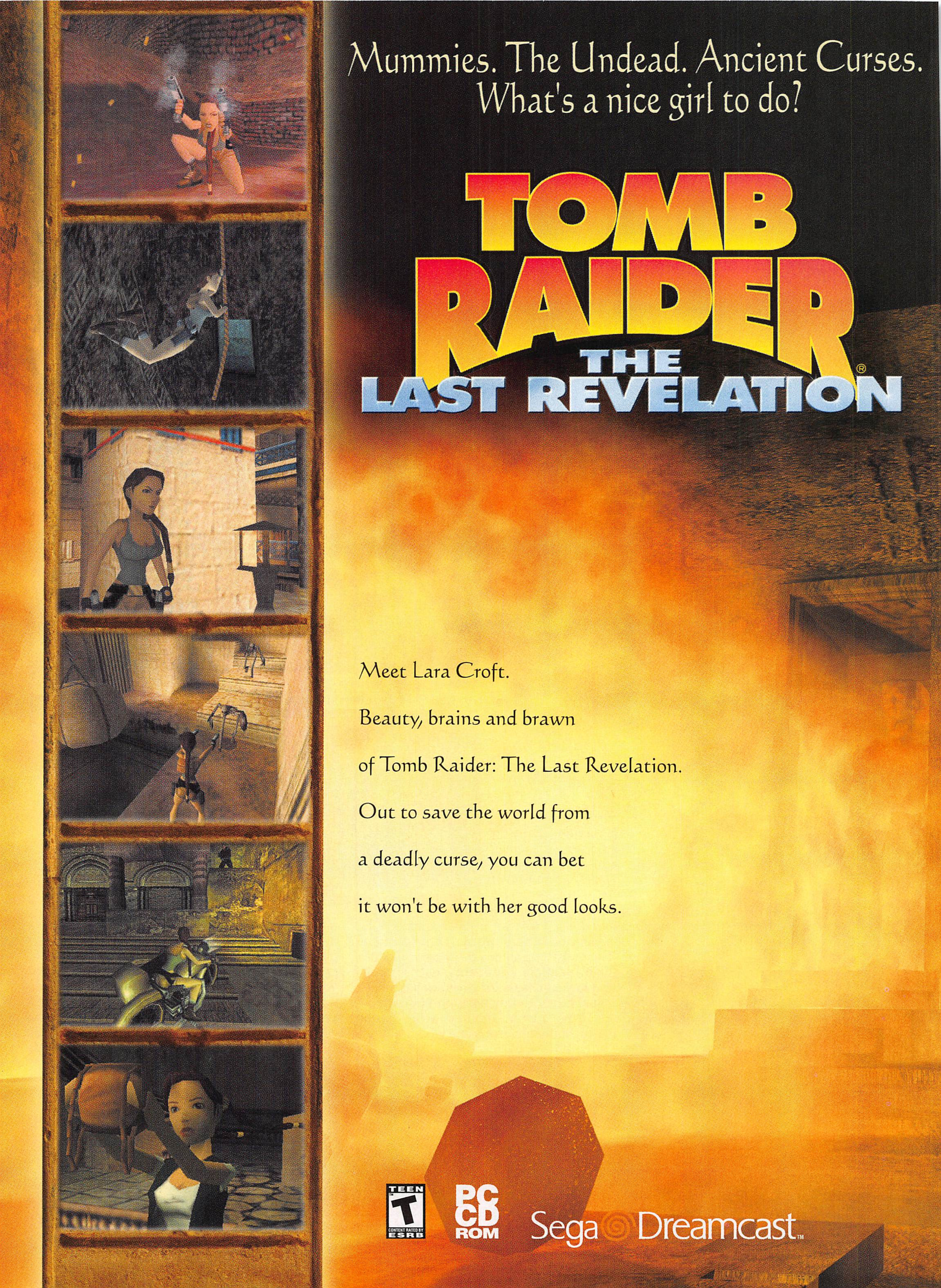
This game debuted with minor sales, but nearly everyone who bought it logged onto the multi-player server and crashed it. Sadly, it seems that Japan needs Netplay games like Eggo needs attention—and in both cases, the quick fix isn't necessarily the best. *Treasure Strike*'s problems start with the camera, which must be moved manually every time you want to target an opponent. The rest of the controls are adequate, but unfortunately, the game just isn't any fun. The levels are much like those of *Power Stone* and *Spawn*, but each one seems to lack any endearing qualities or discerning characteristics. Visually, it's an average game, with simple graphics that look worse than many first-generation DC titles. Unless you're desperate for an average experience, avoid this game like the plague. K





Viewpoint Score	Developer / Publisher	Players / Availability	Kodomo	
:71	Developer - KID	1-4 Players	Kodomo:	Review
	Publisher - KID	Available Now Japan	Just KIDding	

Dreamcast



Mummies. The Undead. Ancient Curses.
What's a nice girl to do?
TOMB RAIDER
THE LAST REVELATION
Meet Lara Croft.
Beauty, brains and brawn
of Tomb Raider: The Last Revelation.
Out to save the world from
a deadly curse, you can bet
it won't be with her good looks.
TEEN
T
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
PC CD ROM
Sega Dreamcast


Available Now
on the
Sega Dreamcast™
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Amusement Showcase International

At the recent Amusement Showcase International (ASI) convention in Las Vegas, NV, the heavy hitters of the arcade and redemption (boo!) business got together to show off their wares to distributors, arcade owners and the media. Sadly, there weren't a lot of surprises at the event. Many of the games we were looking forward to were outright no-shows: Power Stone 2, Guilty Gear X and Samba de Amigo. Curse you, Sega. Ever since returning from Japan, I've had an insatiabl desire to shake maracas with a grin ning, dancing monkey... and everyon thinks I'm crazy because they haven' seen the game. After a little probin at the show, though, it turns out w have no amigos at Sega Arcad America. The game's not schedule for release in U.S. arcades anytim soon (fellow Samba lovers, we'll jus have to be content with the import D copy next month).

Sega

The premiere title at the Sega booth was *Episode I: Racer*, which is similar to the N64 game of the same name. This is **not** the same game, however, or a port, but an original title developed on Hikaru hardware (on a modified NAOMI board). It doesn't feel as fast as the N64 version, but it's fast enough, and you actually sit in a pod racer cabinet. The controls are levers, just like in the movie, which allow you to accelerate, decelerate or turn (like a tank). The sound is piped-in John Williams, and the cabinet shakes underneath you. When I picked Sebulba, even the regular rumbling of his pod racer was there—talk about attention to detail! The game's due out this fall, though Sega wouldn't release any materials. The game's awaiting final license approval.

Other Sega games included *Sega Marine Fishing* and *NASCAR*. *Marine Fishing* is yet another fishing game, which should be out by the time you read this. It's harder than *Get Bass!* was (*Sega Bass Fishing* on DC), and it's running on NAOMI hardware, so DC owners will probably get more use out of their fishing controllers. *NASCAR* (name subject to change) is another NAOMI product, a racing game with the NASCAR license that allows up to



eight people to play simultaneously. The game looked more sim-like than *Daytona 2*, though not to the extreme of *Ferrari 355*. *18 Wheeler* (covered in our April issue) was also on display.

Capcom



Capcom had two titles of note: *Marvel vs. Capcom 2* and *Dimahoo*. We've already covered the DC version of *MvC2* in this issue (see the imports section), and you can get more information about it there, though there are differences between the DC and the arcade games, including playable characters. Aside from that, what can you say about *MvC2*? It's flashy, has lots of characters, and doesn't look as good as the DC rev, because it's running on a monitor, which draws attention to the flaws that aren't as apparent on a normal TV. *Dimahoo* is a little-known arcade shooter. This vertical scroller, developed by Raizing, saw very limited release, but has all the elements of a great shooter. I spent a lot of free time playing *Dimahoo*. It's a rather difficult game, and bears a bit of a resemblance to *Raiden Fighters*... In fact, it felt like many other shooters I'd played. Nevertheless, it had me coming back for more, and we can't wait to get an office rev of this one—ECM's wringing his hands in anticipation (or is that just stress?).

Midway

Midway displayed the latest chapter in the *Cruis'n* saga, *Cruis'n Exotica*, available on linked cabinets for up to four players. *Gauntlet: Dark Legacy*, the sequel to *Gauntlet Legends*, was yet another Midway draw, with more characters, magic and stages than before. The game looks exactly like *Gauntlet Legends*, but has new features such as multi-character combos—so one character can pick up another and use him/her as a weapon (e.g., hold the archer on your shoulder and spin around, wiping out enemies with your makeshift chain gun). *Skins Game* is a golf game to be played against competitors at remote locations, much like *San Francisco Rush*.

Konami



Konami had the best booth at the event, showcasing two of my top picks for best of show: *Enforcer* and *Punch Mania*. Unfortunately, neither of these games are scheduled for U.S. release anytime soon. They were simply brought over from Japan to see how they'd be received—and let me tell you, the response was overwhelmingly positive. Every time I walked by, large crowds of spectators and long lines of players had gathered around both machines.



In *Punch Mania* (based on the anime "Fist of the Northstar"), players don light boxing gloves and punch sensor pads lining the side of the machine as they light up. When finishing off a boss, you have about five seconds to get off 100 punches, and your fists become a blur, just like Ken's Hokuto Shinken rapid punches. *Enforcer* (a.k.a. *Gun Mania* in Japan) is a basic gun game with one helluva gimmick—players get to shoot actual BBs at a screen twelve feet away, which uses sensors to recognize where the shots hit. Don't worry, if any object gets between the gun and the screen, or if the gun's pointed away from the cabinet, it won't fire—so no, you can't shoot your friends with BBs from *Enforcer*.

The reason Konami's balking at bringing these games to the U.S. is for fear of being sued. A game that encourages people to swing their fists wildly or shoot real bullets? In this country, that would certainly be asking for trouble, so I can understand why Konami's apprehensive. Still, these are two of the most original ideas the arcade industry's seen in a long time, and I'm sure they'd both do well if released. Let's just hope that enough people express interest (or Konami gets some really good lawyers) so you can experience both of them.

It's 12 feet long!!!



Other Konami titles to look forward to include: *Simpsons Bowling, Hip Hop Mania Complete Mix 2* and *Dance Dance Revolution USA Mix,* which should all be out by the time you read this. *Simpsons Bowling* is a simple bowling game with a trackball and button scheme. Players choose from the Springfield cartoon cast of characters, including Homer, Bart, Marge, Lisa, Krusty the Clown, Mr. Burns, Kwik-E-Mart owner Apu and groundskeeper Willie. The game's similar to Midway's *NBA Jam* and *Blitz* games—if you land three strikes in a row, you get a flaming bowling ball! *Hip Hop Mania Complete Mix 2* (known as *Beatmania* in Japan) is an update to the original, featuring sixty-five songs, while *Dance Dance Revolution USA Mix* will be out this summer, and will feature a compilation of original Konami songs. Some of them will be from *DDR*'s *3rd* and *4th Mix* in Japan, while others will be cover tunes. No word yet on what specific songs will be used, but it appears that, even in the U.S., the Bemani goes on... **Eggo**





Special Thanks to Loc Mai

GameFan Sports

Not much room this month for me to chat so I will just tell you a good joke that Konami told the industry a couple months back. Actually, they were dead serious when they said it but none of us could help but laugh when we heard it. Get this... Konami's strategy is to capture 50% of the worldwide sports market by 2001. I give Konami of Japan high marks for saying that with a straight face. —*El Niño*





MLB 2001
PlayStation
989 Studios

The last of the 989 games... sigh; and they were just beginning to get good again. Like all of 989's games this year, *MLB 2001* is a major step forward for a series that was falling apart. Still, it is only for those that can't get their hands on *TP2001*.

G	C	P	M	O	
7	8	7	6	5	84

Ahh yes, the end of an... era? 989 is absorbed and hopefully with it, the PlayStation sports titles. There is nothing left to do on this machine and *MLB 2001* is a perfect example. Some good fun but been there, done that.

G	C	P	M	O	
7	8	7	6	4	77



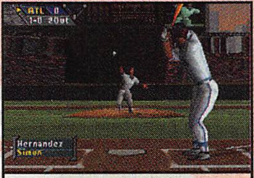
Triple Play 2001
PlayStation
EA

Still the best baseball simulation, on the PlayStation, it none-the-less proves that the genre has been totally played out on the 32-bit system. Only for those that still crave the new rosters and slightly improved product. Time to move on...

G	C	P	M	O	
8	8	9	8	5	89

Only slightly better than *MLB 2001*. Still has the best commentary and deepest options, but the gameplay and interface differ so little from the others, you barely care which one you are actually playing. It's all about *TP2002* for PS2...

G	C	P	M	O	
8	7	7	7	5	78



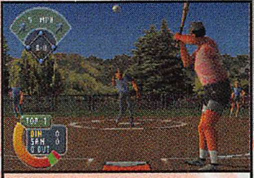
High Heat Baseball 2001
PlayStation
3DO

The upside is that *Sammy Sosa High Heat Baseball* is much better than last year's version. The downside is that it still leaves much to be desired. Truth be told, though, it does have enough going for it to make it worth a rental.

G	C	P	M	O	
6	7	7	5	5	74

If you're the type that doesn't value graphics as much as gameplay, you still may find *High Heat* lacking. Overall, I'd say it's a solid enough title, but there are plenty of baseball games out there that outdo this in so many ways... Rent before you buy...

G	C	P	M	O	
5	8	7	7	6	63



Sammy Sosa Softball
PlayStation
3DO

The High Heat engine is much more suited for fare like this. Better than its sim counterpart, *SSS* is all about arcade baseball with imaginary teams and players. Harkens back to a day when we played *R.B.I. Baseball* on the Nindendo... well ok, it's not THAT good.

G	C	P	M	O	
6	7	7	5	7	75

Hmmm... I'm thinking this will appeal to many of the local league players out there, and there are a BUNCH. If you're one of 'em, you may find your mug (or a close facsimile) herein. Decent, but falls into the same category as *High Heat*: rent first.

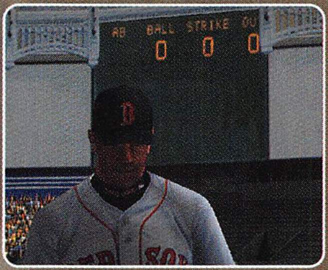
G	C	P	M	O	
5	8	8	6	6	68

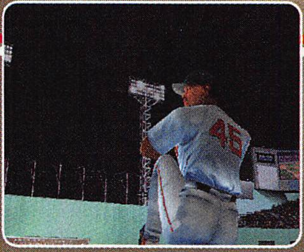
World Series Baseball 2K1

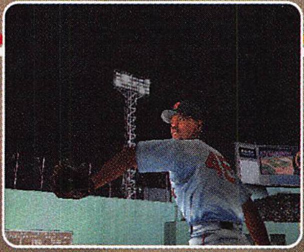
P Preview

Developer: Sega/VC
Publisher: Sega
Available: Summer
\# of Players: 1-4

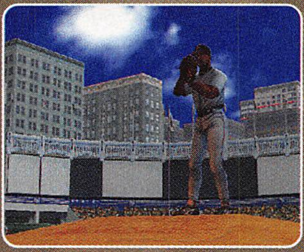




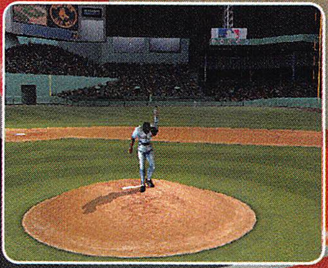


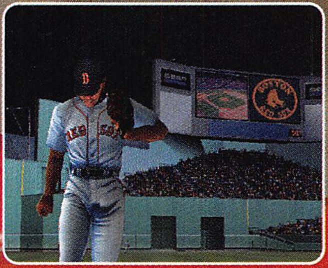


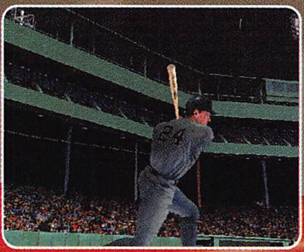


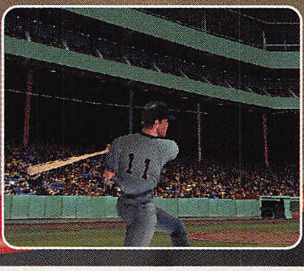


I want you to look at how beautiful these shots are. Now I want you to close your eyes and imagine a game that looks this good and plays like the old *World Series Baseball* on Saturn. The best baseball sim ever made? It very well could be. **EN**









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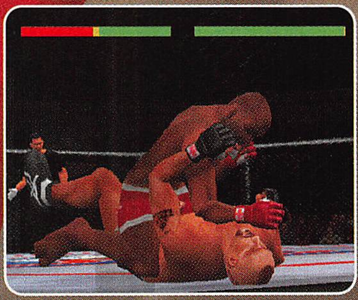
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Ultimate Fighting Championship




Dreamcast

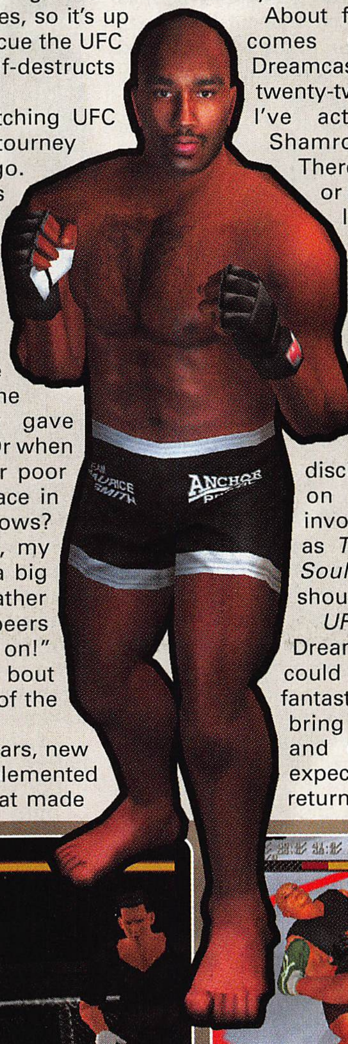
Developer: Anchor, Inc. **Available: 4th qtr.**
Publisher: Crave **# of Players: 1-4**

P Preview

You might not know this, but Bruce Buffer, brother of the popular boxing announcer Michael Buffer, now runs the UFC... Former president Royce Gracie "graciously" bowed out because of sagging ratings and some really lame rule changes, so it's up to Bruce to try and rescue the UFC before it totally self-destructs (pray that he does).

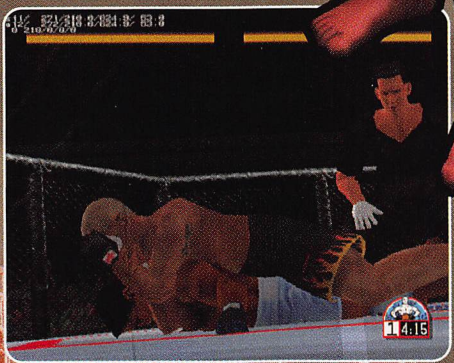
Now, I've been watching UFC since the very first tourney some six years ago. Back then, combatants such as Dan Severn, Keith Hackney and Tank Abbot annihilated opponents in some of the most savage fights I've ever seen. Who doesn't cringe when they think of the pummeling Hackney gave one fighter's crotch? Or when Tank cornered another poor sap and bashed his face in with a flurry of elbows? Every time it was on, my friends would throw a big party, and we'd all gather around, pop open beers and yell, "Let's get it on!" at the start of each bout (much to the chagrin of the ladies in the house).

Over the past two years, new rules have been implemented to really screw up what made UFC so appealing—its ferocity—and we're left with a type of sissy 'slap party' in which the contestants drop instantly to the ground to choke each other out. When Royce did it, it was cool; when everyone else does it, it's lame...



About four years too late, then, comes Crave's *UFC* for the Dreamcast, featuring a whopping twenty-two fighters (two of which I've actually heard of: Frank Shamrock and Mark Coleman). There's no word yet on whether or not some of the older guys like Tank, Dan and Oli will be included as hidden fighters (don't hold your breath). The team that's developing this title, Anchor, Inc., certainly has its work cut out for it, trying to faithfully design a title that features so many different fighting disciplines. A lot of the guys on the Anchor team were involved with such great titles as *Tekken 2, Tobal No. 1* and *Soul Edge*, though, so they should be able to handle it.

UFC will be available on both Dreamcast and PlayStation, and could signal the beginning of a fantastic franchise. Unless they bring back below-the-belt hits and elbowing, though, don't expect the real-life tourney to return to its old glory... **EN**




Arena Football: Unleashed

PlayStation | Preview | Developer: Midway | Publisher: Midway | Available: Spring | # of Players: 1-4

The AFL is truly the 'little football league that could'... It draws crowds all across the country, and has been one of the most popular sports sub-cultures for several years. Before the emergence and success of Kurt Warner this past year, though, it's received little mainstream attention. It's as popular as ever now, though, so what better time could Midway find to capitalize on that popularity, and perhaps increase the sport's audience even more?

Arena football (for any uninitiated souls out there) is played indoors, on fields half the size of regular football... The running game is virtually nonexistent, and a good kicker can stick a field goal between the uprights from his own end zone. Walls are fair territory in arena football, and gnarly crashes frequently occur on out patterns. In a nutshell, arena football's an up-tempo version of the NFL designed to excite viewers whose attention spans have dwindled and whose need for viscera have increased.

If you want to know what *Arena Football: Unleashed* will offer the gamer, though, you need look no further than any of my *NFL Blitz* reviews and previews. *Unleashed* employs the same *Blitz* engine, and practically the same gameplay. Everything—and I mean everything—is exactly the same as *Blitz*, with the exception of the pass routes and the AFL license. What this will undoubtedly mean to gamers is that, if you already own a *Blitz* title, then playing this will be pointless. If you have yet to try a *Blitz* game, though, then maybe this one's for you.

Hopefully, the finished version will feature some extra polish on it to justify in some way the release of this seemingly blatant cash run... We'll know for sure when *Arena Football: Unleashed* debuts this spring. **EN**









Sydney 2000

PlayStation | Preview | Dev.: Attention to Detail | Publisher: Eidos | Avail.: Aug. | # of Players: 1-4

The amateur athlete... it's an almost extinct animal, one seen on only the rarest of occasions (don't even bring up the NCAA), and it's never around for long. Amateur sport's greatest stage is the Olympics, yet as the Sydney games rapidly approach, I was beginning to wonder where the Olympic video games were...

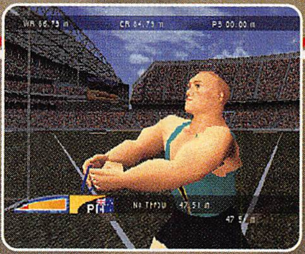
Maybe I shouldn't wonder that much, though. When was the last time a developer made a good Olympic title? It's been a while, hasn't it? But we're talking about the international Olympic Games here! The Olympics should be one of the most lucrative licenses, with some of the coolest games, yet all it has to show from the past few years is *Nagano Winter Olympics*?!? Yikes! Can Eidos and Attention To Detail buck that trend?

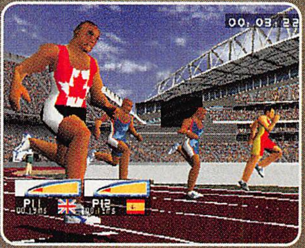
It's possible—but don't expect it to be done with graphics. These early pictures are far from the kind of 32-bit eye candy we expect from a fifth-generation title. Wait—are these fifth-generation PlayStation games yet? I've lost count. Regardless, the game obviously needs work there...

The game will also reportedly feature twelve events, sixteen countries and TV-style presentation to inject *Sydney 2000* with as much excitement as possible. One interesting addition that I have yet to see in any other Olympic game is a Virtual Gym mode that allows you to build your own Olympic team... Push your athletes to the brink with some serious training, utilizing twenty different activities to hone their skills and strengthen their bodies. There are no gold medals for the lazy...

Sydney 2000 has a lot to prove before I'll award it any medals. Still, it'll be cool to be able to compete for Olympic glory in such events as weightlifting, kayaking and the long jump, whether on my PlayStation or my Dreamcast... **EN**



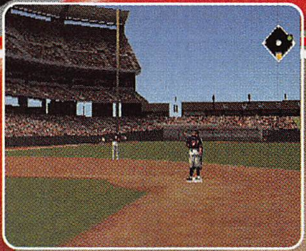


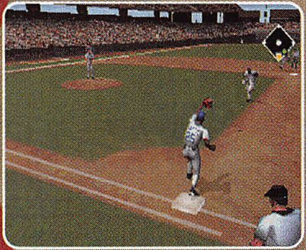


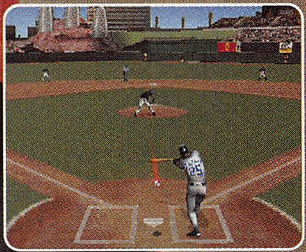


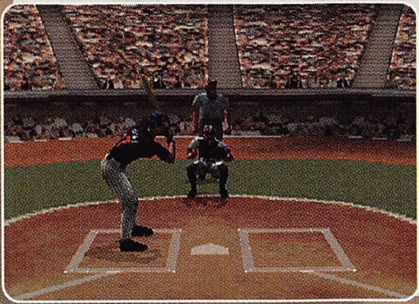
Triple Play 2001

PlayStation | R Review | Developer: Treyarch | Publisher: EA Sports | Available: Now | # of Players: 1-2









This franchise has been around a long, long time... Any one of you could probably have written this review without playing the newest version at all. What exactly do I mean by that? A lot of things, really...

For starters, it says that not much has changed between *TP 2000* and *TP 2001*. *TP*'s play mechanics, interface and style have become so familiar to gamers that if the developers even tried to change them, people would throw fits. Therefore, the developers have implemented only minor "fixes." Ultimately, *Triple Play 2001*'s precisely the same experience as its former incarnations.

It also means that all the things new to the game are just improvements on improvements made over the years. Do you really need me to tell you that there's more motion-capture, better commentary, updated rosters and a smattering of unnecessary extras like the 500 Home Run Club? I hope not. If I do, it just means you haven't been paying attention.

As a whole, I'll go so far as to say that *Triple Play 2001*'s the best PlayStation baseball sim on the market. Now, anyone that's read my reviews of this series over the past several years knows that I haven't always considered *TP* as the top pick. *VR Baseball* used to be my choice, but it was painfully clear that no matter what gripes I presented about the product—or the accolades I showered on its competitor's product, for that matter—baseball fans have always gravitated toward *TP*. Heck, all my buddies think I'm a fool for ever doubting *TP*'s reign as the king of baseball sims.

That's not to say that I'm giving in and just running with the crowd... *TP 2001* is this year's best baseball title, hands down. It's better than all that have come before it. This is one baseball sim you can be certain will satiate your desire to emulate our national pastime. Now put this franchise to bed on the 32-bit—give me something on PS2 and Dreamcast! **EN**

High Heat Baseball 2001

PlayStation | R Review | Developer: 3DO | Publisher: Team .366 | Available: Now | # of Players: 1-2







Apparently, a number of the editors in the video game industry have taken up crack smoking. I've never actually *seen* any of them hit the pipe, but it's clear that they're whacked out of their heads when they start saying stuff like, *"High Heat Baseball 2000* was the best baseball sim of 1999." Yikes... That game sucked.

I must confess, though, that I've taken a liking to *HH2001*. Is it Sammy's namesake that makes this title entertaining? Of course not. Is it the fact that the players no longer look like they have steel rods rammed down their spines? Maybe... In reality, there are a lot of little reasons why this year's *High Heat* has been successful. Standing alone, none of its improvements mean much, but the game's strength lies in the sum of their parts.

I look at *High Heat 2001* as escapist fun for those that have grown weary of *Triple Play*. In every comparison, *Triple Play* outshines *High Heat*, from graphics and sound to stat tracking and depth. But *High Heat* succeeds in delivering a very relaxing, ultimately enjoyable day at the park... If you want to start making analogies, *Triple Play*'s representative of today's baseball scene: high-octane, flashy and all about marketing. But *High Heat* plays like baseball of old: lazy, fun... and simple.

That's not to say that *HH2001* is without the many extraneous options for managing, stat tracking and customization; those are all in there. It just doesn't seem as obtrusive. As I played *HH2001*, I felt like I was playing a baseball sim from years past. I didn't feel the obligation to fiddle with the lineups, make a zillion managerial decisions or pine over whether or not my favorite players were putting up numbers similar to their real-life counterparts. I just played... and played.

The super-smooth scrolling and pastoral graphics are what probably put me the most at ease. Add a really basic batter/pitcher interface and a low learning curve, and you have the type of gameplay that'll appeal to idle baseball fans as well as the educated sim players.

This editor, however, is *not* smoking crack, so I'll forgo showering heavy accolades on *High Heat 2001*. At the end of the day, it's still an inferior product to *Triple Play 2001*, and is not recommended as a replacement. It is, however, a solid baseball game that certainly deserves a look. **EN**









Robo Aleste™

The Sega CD—sure, you could scoff and laugh and go along with the general consensus that it was a "door stop" or "paperweight" to so many Internet disciples... After all, it was just another hunk of plastic Sega produced without regard to its fans, and it slowly drowned in a sea of movies masquerading as games (hmmm, and these are the same people that herald *Final Fantasy* as the next coming... curious). But you may be surprised to know that there were actually a large number of killer games available for this hot little peripheral—games like *Batman Returns* (scaling mania!), *Flink*, *AH-3 Thunderstrike* and *Wonder Dog* (back when Core was cool), Duo ports like *Lords of Thunder* and *Dungeon Explorer II*, *Ernest Evans* (just kidding, ha ha), and so on. In fact, as long as its games weren't FMV-based or aurally enhanced Genesis or SNES games, the Sega CD was pretty cool. Which brings me to a game that's near and dear to my heart—and was only available on Sega CD...

Original Release: 1993
From: Compile/Tengen

Compile's ***Robo Aleste!***

Does anybody out there remember my great and undying love for all shooters coded by the late, great Compile (and 'shmups' in general, I suppose)? Sure, Compile's still around, but it's been in a *Puyo Puyo* daze for the past six years... As a brief history lesson, they're the guys responsible for titles such as *M.U.S.H.A.* (*Aleste* in Japan, which is potentially my fave of all time), *Blazing Lasers* (for TG-16, *Gunhed* in Japan), *Spriggan 1 & 2* (PCE CD-ROM and Super CD—unreleased domestically <grumble>) and *Space Megaforce* (*Super Aleste* in Japan), as well as some older NES games like *Zanac* and *Guardian Legend* (among many others). Well, Compile also released one Sega CD title way back when: *Denin Aleste*, a.k.a. *Nobunaga and His Ninja Force*, a.k.a. *Robo Aleste*, published by the late, great Tengen.

Now, there are two sides of the Compile shooter family (or there were, till that damnable Arle went and chased them out of town <grumble>): the spaceship side and the mech battle suit side. *Robo Aleste* resided firmly in the latter—and better—half of the family, along with *M.U.S.H.A.* and *Spriggan*. Now, some will try to tell you that *Space Megaforce* was a better game (they're probably too busy overdosing on the Mode 7 effects—"Ooh, that space station is sooooo pretty <drool>"), and anybody that only had an SNES, which had all of two shooters worth talking about (*SM* and *Axelay*, and *Axelay* was *clearly* the better game) would tell you the same thing. Of course, there's still *Blazing Lasers* on the TG-16, but...

RA was also a pseudo-sequel to *Aleste/M.U.S.H.A.*, which meant that most everyone that played the latter had super-high (when "high" just isn't enough) expectations for the former. The only problem was that the first title in the series was so absolutely incredible that crafting something to even rival it would take a rather large water-into-wine-style miracle to accomplish. Needless to say, it didn't *quite* make it.

"Does anybody out there remember my great and undying love for all shooters?"

RA shared most of the traits that made the earlier effort so remarkable, yet it didn't quite come together as tightly. After all, anybody that's played *M.U.S.H.A.* will tell you that it's among the best games ever made, and 'tis sheer folly to think otherwise <grinning maniacally>. However, given the relatively barren shooter scene at the time, *RA* was met with open arms by any and everybody that considered themselves a fan of the genre—especially after *Silpheed* failed outright to be the end-all, be-all that it was hyped to be (we won't name any
















names on that one <cough>, Storm <hack>).

What *RA* did have going for it in spades, though, were traits that all Compile shooters shared: solid, highly detailed visuals, great 'character' design and absolutely unbelievable soundtracks. Speaking of soundtracks, someone over at Compile really needs to get off their arse, re-arrange and release a CD filled with its greatest hits (any budding musicians out there tempted to take on a little project for me?)...

The feudal Japanese theme of *RA* was certainly a nice change of pace, too, especially from the 'armada from outer space'-type shmups we'd all grown to know and love. Players assumed the role of Kage, venturing out to save his master and people from an encroaching army by piloting his Aleste attack suit into the heart of enemy fortifications and generally making life easier for the good guys (i.e., nuking full-screen bosses and countless other steam-powered mechs that put up about as much

"someone over at Compile really needs to get off their arse, re-arrange and release a CD filled with its greatest hits"

resistance as the nearest roll of Charmin... two-ply, naturally). The action did get hot and heavy in later levels, though, and even relative shooter newbie Eggo, who thrives on über-difficult, arcade-style shooters (*Gunbird 2*, et al), had to admit that *RA* gave him a nice workout in just a few levels. For his sake, I neglected to mention that the game was merely set to 'normal' difficulty... he'll feel the pain soon enough, though, be sure of that.

The best part about *RA* these days? I walked into a used game shop about a week ago, snagged another copy (the third one I've owned <sigh>) and walked out with it for less than $10... not bad for one of the Sega CD's finer hours. I suggest you do the same, though snagging a Genesis with CD-ROM could prove daunting... I'd recommend taking Eggo's route and hunting down the nearest CDX, even if it means shelling out some extra coin. You'll thank me for it later. **ECM**









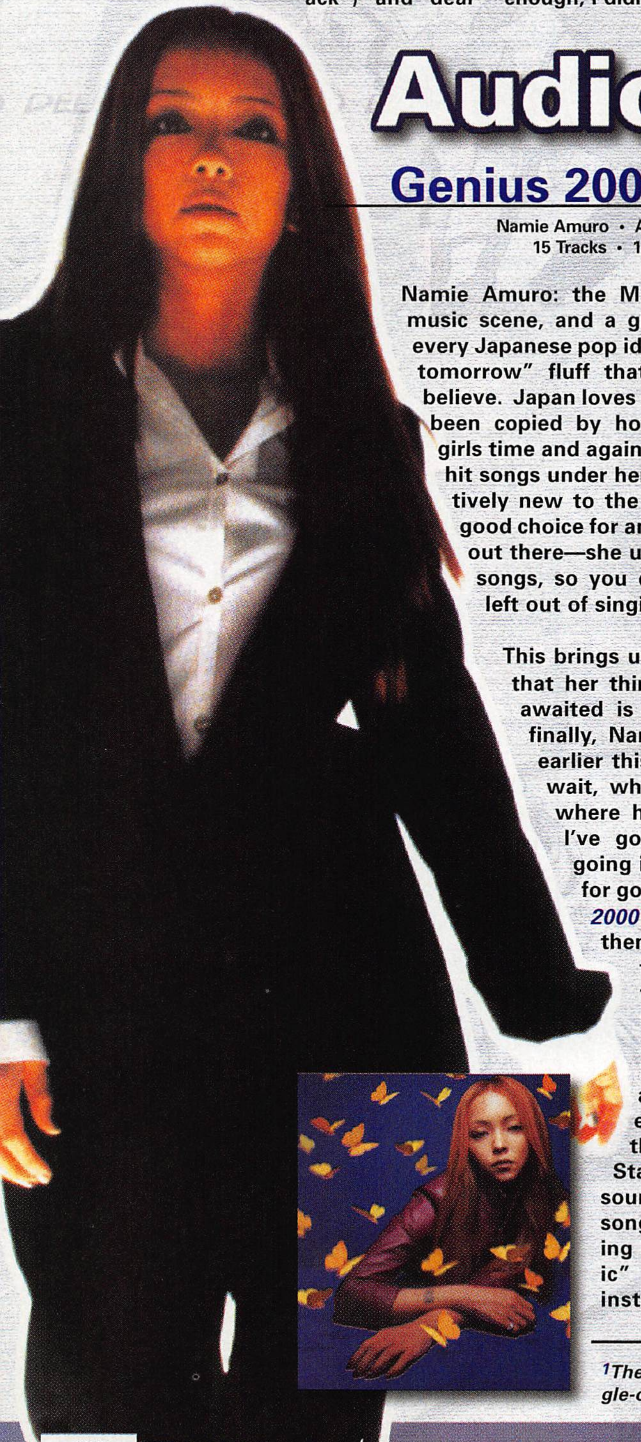


AnimeFan

Anime, Manga, J-pop, Asian Live Action, Otaku Culture

A Note from Shidoshi...

Boy, this has been one of my most dreaded weeks in quite some time. Not only did the powers that be tell me to have AnimeFan done, but I also had to, in the very same week, deal with my birthday (turned 25... *ack*) and deal with my dear Aki-chan going back to Japan having no idea when she will be returning (she'll kill me for mentioning her, but she also wanted me to mention her so that she could blackmail me some day, so there you go). Ugh. Surprisingly enough, I didn't snap and go postal or anything (everyone who knows me is pretty sure that is going to happen sooner than later), but I'll still be glad to have this week over. Thankfully I've got a whole host of games I still need to play/finish to drown my sorrows in. *shidoshi@gamefan.com*



Audio Delights

Genius 2000

Namie Amuro • Album • Avex Trax
15 Tracks • 1 CD • Jpn Release

B

Namie Amuro: the Madonna of the Japanese music scene, and a glowing example that not every Japanese pop idol is the "here today gone tomorrow" fluff that some might have you believe. Japan loves her, her style and look has been copied by hordes of young Japanese girls time and again, and she has a number of hit songs under her belt. If you are still relatively new to the J-pop scene, Namie is a good choice for any non-Japanese speakers out there—she uses a lot of English in her songs, so you don't have to feel totally left out of singing along.

This brings us to *Genius 2000*. To say that her third album[1] has been long awaited is an understatement, and finally, Namie released this project earlier this year. After such a long wait, what do Namie fans everywhere have to look forward to? I've got to say, I was excited going into this CD. I'm a sucker for good packaging, and *Genius 2000* looks SLICK. The main theme is a very rich blue, and the cover is graced with the beautiful Namie surrounded by yellow butterflies. Simple, yet elegant and very visually appealing. Things got even better when I heard the first song, *Love 2000*. Starting off with the lone sounds of a low string, the song explodes with a booming beat, a sort of "cybernetic" sounding collection of instruments and samples, and Namie's voice singing with energy over all of this. I love, love, love this song, and have put it on repeat more times than my housemates would like me to.

Leavin' for Las Vegas is catchy and does quite a bit with minimal instruments and beats, instead letting Namie's vocals carry the burden. A strange comparison, but it reminded me a lot of the work of an older group called Shakespeare's Sister. *Next to You* really throws me off, because it greatly reminds me of Jennifer Lopez's *If You Want My Love* song. *You are the One*, a duet with Imajin, is good, if not a bit reminiscent of many other similar soundings songs that I've seen performed on a variety of Japanese music shows. We also get two remixes of older songs, *Respect the Power of Love* and *I Have Never Seen*. I'm a fan of both of these tracks, and find the newer "more rockin'" versions of them interesting, though probably not better. Then things go bad as the album declines as it goes into its second half. The later tracks did little or nothing for me—*Things I Collected*, *Asking Why*, and *Give it a Try* are all tracks that I felt just didn't go anywhere. They have no real power, little strength or personality, and come off seeming like a bit of dead weight on the album. Compared to killer tracks like *Love 2000*, they just can't compare.

This album is a tough recommendation. I don't think this is the best example of Namie's work, and would instead point those looking to purchase their first (or "diminutive") Namie Amuro album towards her compilation CD *181920* instead. There are some good tracks on here, just not enough of them. Maybe the entire album will grow on me over time, but for now, it's a very mixed bag. Not the best album to give yourself a great taste of what Namie is all about, but a decent album if you are looking for some new music from her. —*shidoshi*

[1]The Japanese music scene is far more single-oriented than our own US music scene. While this is only her third album, she also has twenty-one singles out there.

Manga Scene



Lodoss—the Lady of Pharis

$15.95 US • Fantasy • CPM Manga • 13+
208 pages • US Format • Graphic Novel

B

For many fans, the original *Record of Lodoss War* anime series was what Lodoss is all about. However, look a bit deeper, and you'll find a fully created world that more resembles the *Advanced Dungeons and Dragons* mythos that we Americans are more used to. Ryo Mizuno, the creative genius behind Lodoss, has written numerous best-selling novels, manga titles, and role playing games all centered around this magical and mythical world and its inhabitants, legends, and lore. One such tale is *Record of Lodoss War: the Lady of Pharis*, a tale which gives us a look into the distant history of the accursed island Lodoss. We are introduced to Flaus, a beautiful young girl who is also the leader of the Warrior Priests of Pharis. A terrible evil has been released upon the land by a power-hungry lord, and Flaus now travels the land to access the devastation that has fallen upon its people and try to find a cure for this evil plague. In her journeys, she bands together with a small group of warriors, and they are now given the task of being the heroes for all people and pulling Lodoss out from the darkness it has fallen into.

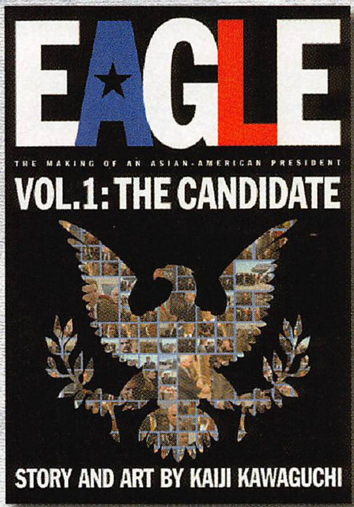
The artwork for *The Lady of Pharis* isn't quite what you might be expecting: Artist Akihiro Yamada uses a style more detailed, more like you might expect from an American comic (of course, with a Japanese flair) for this *Lodoss* saga. I wasn't quite sure what I thought of his style at first, but it grew on me after a while. For a story like *Lodoss*, this type of artwork look and feel is certainly fitting. My only concern is that due to the amount of detail, it is sometimes hard to understand what is going on in certain scenes.

Record of Lodoss War: the Lady of Pharis is an interesting read, and will no doubt appeal to anyone who finds the story of Lodoss and it's expansive history interesting. It's great to see a story that has been crafted so well, from its history to its future to the people and creatures that inhabit said world. I will say that this is a manga very much like *Nausicaa*—while it isn't as deep as Miyazaki's masterpiece, it is similar in regards to being the kind of thing you don't want to sit down and read unless you are really in the mood. Give yourself some quiet time if you are going to dive into this *Lodoss* tale. The individual comics came out quite a while ago, but as you read this, the Graphic Novel version will have just seen release. —*shidoshi*

Eagle

$6.95 US • Drama • Viz • 13+
112 pages • US Format • Graphic Novel

B+



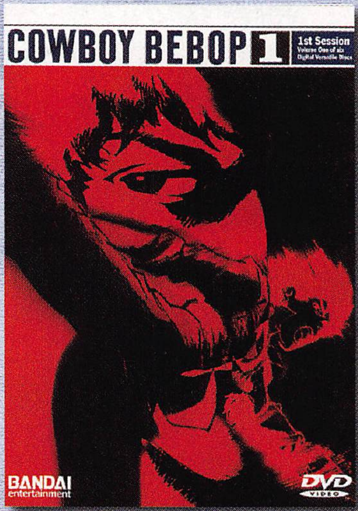
The US Presidential Race 2000: Many candidates fight their best fight to become the one man left standing, and our next US President. But into this race, a dark horse has entered. That dark horse is Kenneth Yamaoka, a Democratic senator from the state of New York. His entry has shaken up the race, due quite a bit to the fact that he is the first Japanese-American to take a shot at the Presidency. Who is the man, and what kind of chance does he have at becoming president? Those are the questions that Takashi Jo, a young Japanese reported, must answer. From out of nowhere, he is assigned to cover Yamaoka's race for the presidency, but no one knows exactly why he was the one chosen. Put on a plane and sent off to Washington D.C., Jo must do his best to blend into American society, and learn more about Senator Yamaoka. But the Senator lets Jo in on a little secret, one that sends Jo reeling and unsure if he can do the job he was sent to do.

Eagle is written and drawn by Kaiji Kawaguchi, the same manga artist who was responsible for the political drama *The Silent Service*. *Eagle* is a very interesting release, for a number of reasons. First, it offers a wonderful new diversity to the US manga scene. I do believe this is the first political manga out there to reach our shores, and it really serves to strengthen our manga choices. A big amount of respect has to go to Viz as well for how they are handling this release. There will be fourteen issues of *Eagle*, one each month, the first having been released in February of this year (for the New Hampshire primary), and continuing on until the last hits in the same month as Inauguration Day. Thus, the release of this fantasy 2000 US Presidential run is times to go right along with the real-life thing. When I say "fourteen issues," however, I mean fourteen serialized graphic novels—each release of Eagle will be a 100+ page book. Very cool—but now, PLEASE, can we start having more releases like this, and less of the "American typical" 32-48 paged monthly issues?! Again, it is great to see titles like this coming our way. I was very interested in checking *Eagle* out when I first heard about it, and while I may not be the biggest fan of politics, it is still an interesting and engrossing tale. *Eagle* promises to be a wonderful manga drama that we are lucky to get the chance to experience. —*shidoshi*

Next Issue

Next month, we'll have an update on the *Pokemon* phenomenon and some of the newer products that have come out for it. Then we'll throw in more J-pop, with either a look at Misia's album *Mother Father Brother Sister*, or SPEED's last album and their last concert VideoCD. As well, look for a review of the first volume of ADV's *Evangelion* DVDs. How has *Eva* fared on DVD? Find out next issue.

Special Feature



Cowboy BeBop DVD

Wow. I had high hopes for Bandai's first DVD releases, but I wasn't quite expecting this. This may be one of the first anime DVD titles to come from Bandai, but you certainly can't tell. The video transfer has quality, clarity, and color richness that you almost only see in Pioneer releases. I didn't know that *BeBop* could look this good, but I'm damn glad that it does. This is another example disc to use when making the argument of why VHS should die a quick death and everything should come out on DVD. The menus for the DVD are pretty snazzy as well—it's set up to look like the little computer that is used aboard the BeBop. As far as extras go, we get a few bits of the "Session 0" disc that was released in Japan: an introduction to the cast, and a music video for "Tank!" Also, a few Bandai previews are thrown in there for good measure. The best part of this DVD release, though (well, beyond the video quality) has to be the packaging: Cool isn't a good enough word to describe it. The whole thing, front to back, is made up to look like an old record album, and the DVD itself even has artwork to make it look like a vinyl 45. The cover art is striking, and fits with the mood and style of the show far better than the VHS artwork. Yup, another reason to pick the DVD release over the VHS. *Cowboy BeBop* is a must own series, and the DVD release does it total justice. Kudos to Bandai for such a great DVD, and I look forward to more of this kind of quality from their future releases. BTW, great job on the dub for the most part as well. I disliked none of the voices, and rather dug the English versions of Spike and Jet.—*shidoshi*

Anime Drive-In

Photon—Vol. 1

AF Best of the Issue!

Adventure / Comedy • OVA • Soft. Sculptors
13+ • 60 min • Sub | Dub • VHS | DVD

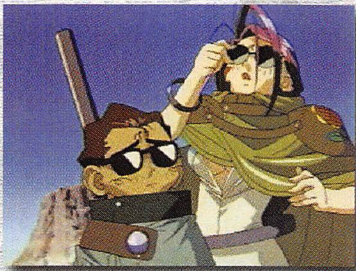
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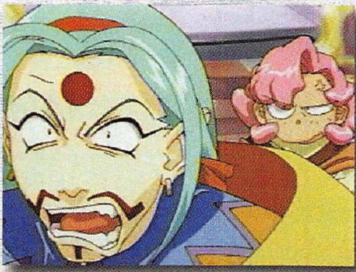


If you were to talk to any of the anime companies that I deal with, you would know that there have been three titles I've been trying to get someone to pick up in the US: *Sakura Diaries*, *Photon*, and *Hana Yori Dango*. Now that two of those titles have been picked up, my crusade now centers around *Dango* (and recently added *Kodomo no Omocha*). Anyhow, enough of that—*Photon* is here, but why do I care, and more importantly, why should you?

If *Elf Princess Rane* was the comedy hit of 1999, *Photon* is posed and ready to steal that title away for 2000. What makes *Photon* so great is that it succeeds at a number of levels. First, it has many scenes that will unquestionably have you falling to the floor with laughter, something many titles try to do, but fail. Yet, *Photon* also has a level of subtle, deep rooted comedy to it—the cheap gags and jokes work great when used, but also aren't what *Photon* completely relies on. No, *Photon* builds upon a great case and setting to craft a story that provides for hilarious comedy but also stands strong beyond that. When I first watched *Photon*, I was in awe of its world, its inhabitants and technology and design—this feels like the type of setting you would find in a project from Square. Photon oozes coolness, yet he's also an immature kid at heart, while our main villain is a bad, bad man, yet is so charming and likable in being such. The only—and I mean ONLY—concern I had going into this review was how the dub would turn out. I mean, *Photon* is fabulous, and that point simply isn't up for argument. But could CPM do right with the dub? Having seen the original Japanese version of *Photon* (with voices that fit perfectly), I was pleased to find that the English voices not only sounded pretty good, but fit the character to how they should sound. That is, except the man himself, Photon. I couldn't hope for the PERFECT voice he had in the Japanese version, but man, the voice they gave him is SO not fitting to his character and personality. A real shame.

Photon is the best anime title to be released in the US so far this year. *Photon* will be with no uncertainty one of the best anime releases in the US this year. You must own this series. MUST. Even better, get the DVD version when it arrives, and see it the way it should be seen. —*shidoshi*



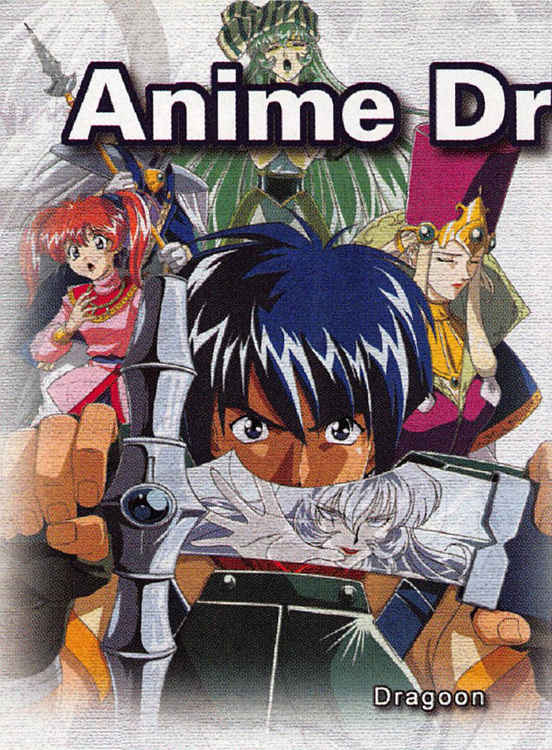







CAUTION
Keep hands away from cage!
"This is one of those shows that, after watching, you just sit there thinking, 'Wow-that was cool.'"
Shidoshi, GameFan Magazine
Pet Shop of Horrors
From the Anime Dreamteam: Hisashi Abe (Vampire Hunter D), Rintaro (Final Fantasy) and Yoshiaki Kawajiri (Bio Hunter, Ninja Scoll, Wicked City)
Pet Shop of Horrors Volume 2
COMING IN MAY!
The terms of sale are non-negotiable, and a breach of contract can be deadly.
Man-eating fish, matricidal rabbits, mythical beasts of ancient legends — Welcome to Chinatown's most unique pet shop. This way, please - there is a variety of exotic creatures to choose from; and the perfect pet for everyone waits here to be brought home and cherished. But be careful; what you see is not necessarily what you get.
UV1058
UV1059 SUB
Run time: Approximately 60 minutes (contains two 30 minute episodes)
$19.95 s.r.p. VHS English Dubbed
$29.95 s.r.p. VHS English Subtitled
Available at all
SUNCOAST MOTION PICTURE COMPANY We Know Movies
and other retailers near you!
SUNCOAST MOTION PICTURE COMPANY We Know Movies
What A Deal!
Visit any SUNCOAST store, buy Pet Shop of Horrors and get $5.00 OFF Wicked City or Vampire Hunter D.
UV1044
UV1045 SUB
UV1056
UV1057 SUB
This coupon gets you $5.00 off either Wicked City or Vampire Hunter D when you purchase Pet Shop of Horrors at Suncoast Motion Picture Company.
Stores: Use Manufacturer Code #183
2 00005 00183 9
COUPON GOOD ONLY AT SUNCOAST MOTION PICTURE COMPANY LOCATIONS. Limit one item per coupon. Offer cannot be used in conjunction with any other coupon, sale offer, special order, reservation title, or online purchase. Hurry, coupon valid through May 30, 2000.
SPECIAL INTERACTIVE ONLINE CONTEST
STAR FOR A DAY
Only the Pet Shop Of Horrors Video possesses the secret password to unlock the count's beautiful and unusual world with the promise of amazing new sights and the chance to travel to Los Angeles to Star in your favorite UV anime title!
URBAN VISION
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CHECK OUT OUR WEBSITE AND TAKE A STAB AT OUR MONTHLY CONTESTS!

Anime Drive-In



Dragoon

Dragoon

Adventure • OAV • ADV Films
17+ • 90 min • Sub | Dub • VHS | DVD

C+

While doing his daily training in the the woods, a young swordsman named Sedon is startled by a group of soldiers searching for something nearby. As he tries to get a closer look at them, he trips over a woman lying in the snow. Who is she, and where did she come from? He takes her back to his cabin to get her out of the cold, but their rest is soon interrupted by the soldiers. Sedon takes the young girl, who remembers nothing but her name—May—to his father. His father tells Sedon that the soldiers he saw were from the Empire, and something major must be afoot. Sedon then promises May that he will protect her as she searches to find out who she is and why the Empire is hunting her down.

Dragoon is one of those shows that is rather middle of the road—there is nothing that wrong with it, yet it also isn't anything special. It doesn't break any new ground, but it also doesn't crash and burn. The artwork is actually pretty good, especially in close up shots, unfortunately this is backed up by some mediocre animation. The storyline has been seen countless times—girl who is the key to some epic ordeal turns up somewhere with amnesia and is taken into the care of a young male hero. So, if you've had enough of that storyline, you'll want to stay away. The dub job isn't of the better quality that ADV is quite often known for these days, but there was only once or twice that it really bothered me, so for the most part it also wasn't an overly offensive dub.

As I said, *Dragoon* is one of those titles that is just "there." Yet, I kind of dug the show, and would watch more of it if given the chance. I can't tell you to go out and buy this video, or to avoid it at all costs—so I'll just say that you might want to check *Dragoon* out if you have the chance, but don't go out of your way to do so. *—shidoshi*







Eat Man '98—Vol. 6

Action • TV (2 eps) • Bandai
15+ • 48 min • Sub | Dub • VHS | DVD

C+

A political race is quickly heating up: The current leader, President Grant, is trying his best to defeat his opponent, Senator Sharif. Soon, a series of assassination attempts are made, all said to be the work of a lone gunner named Rafin. Both sides decide to hire mercenaries for protection, but all is not what it seems as a well-contrived underground plot is taking place. The unlikely team of Hard, a mercenary, and Thelma, a hot headed reporter, goes to work trying to figure out the truth behind all of the lies, and end up finding a friend and ally in the mysteries Bolt Crank.

Over the original *Eat Man* anime series, things have been a bit tightened up here. The stories in *Eat Man '98* are based more off of the manga series, and the story on a whole felt like it had more polish to it. As well, production values are raised above the original series, which is always a good thing. Unfortunately, the goofy charm that the original series had seems all but lost. Then you combine this with the fact that, at least in this volume, out of both episodes Bolt had, I swear, only a few minutes of onscreen time total. With very little Bolt, and very little "Eat Man charm," there ended up not being much personality to the show. It's a real shame too, because at certain moments while watching, a small glimmer of how cool Bolt and his adventures could be shines through—how cool they could be if just crafted in the proper way.

It's a tough call, but I might actually recommend the original *Eat Man* series over *Eat Man '98*. Neither is without merit, and both do things better over the other. So why the original? It was a sillier show, and come on, how serious can you take a man that goes around eating people's guns? If you are a big *Eat Man* fan, then by all means check this one out, but for the rest of you out there, I'm not sure how much there is in this title for you. *—shidoshi*



Eat-Man '98

Anime Drive-In

Ranma 1/2—...the Harder They Fall

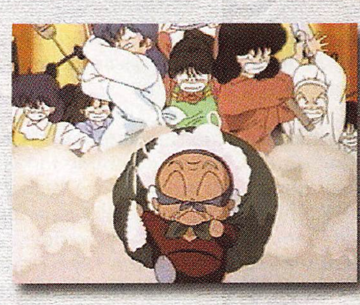
Comedy • TV (2 Eps.) • Viz Video
8+ • 52 min • Sub | Dub • VHS | DVD

B

It seems that Happosai has had one too many interruptions of his infamous panty raids, and this time he is going to get even. When Ranma helps the crowd of girls chasing the old man to catch up with him and recover their stolen unmentionables, Happosai puts a curse on him. The curse saps Ranma of all of his strength, and to make matters worse, Happosai informs all of Ranma's enemies of his sudden loss of fighting ability. So what is Ranma to do? With the help of his father and Akane, they find out that Happosai has an ancient text which tells not only how to place the curse, but how to remove it as well. But how can Ranma defeat Happosai and steal the text back in his current state? An ancient spiritual attack, known as the Hiryu Shotenha, may just be the key. If Ranma can perfect this move, then he may just have a chance of beating Happosai at his own game...

I've never been a huge fan of *Ranma 1/2*—it's funny, I really enjoy the manga version at times, but for some reason I just can't completely "get into" it. There's nothing really wrong with the show—the animation is okay, the cast is varied and interesting, and the jokes are good—I just think there is too much *Ranma 1/2* and it is just too over-exposed (like many are feeling about *Pokemon*). However, many an American anime fan love the show, and for Japanese people watching it, is the same kind of experience that I would have reliving classics such as *Transformers* or *He-Man* (my girlfriend was watching with me and her face lit up as she reminisced about seeing the series in her youth). So, with so many people going nuts for *Ranma 1/2*, who am I to disagree? It's a fun series to watch, but as I said, I just can't get religious about it. If you've never seen the show, you can jump in at pretty much any point and not be completely lost—just be aware that if you DO want to start from the beginning, there are like a billion episodes of *Ranma 1/2* out there. Finally, I am a bit disappointed in Viz. After all of this time, they are STILL only putting two episodes on each volume. In this day and age, and with a series with so many episodes that won't run out anytime soon, that's uncalled for. —*shidoshi*









Special Feature

Sol Bianca—the Legacy

Here's a sneak peek at the new *Sol Bianca* series coming to the US in the near future. The storyline here is sort of a fresh start, with little to no ties to the first. Hundreds of years have passed since humans left Earth, and now our old home is but a distant memory. Events occur, and a relic from the past brings about a great mystery. Our heroes then go on an intergalactic search to uncover the secret to this mysterious situation.















AF News Service

Nausicaa Next for DVD?

On a recent update on the Anchor Bay website, two new DVD titles scheduled for December showed up which have caused a lot of eyebrows to raise.

The first is a title called *Angel's Egg*. I'm going to be honest—I know little to nothing about this show. It was produced in 1985, directed by Mamoru Oshii, with character designs by Yoshitaka Amano. The story is about a young girl who must protect an egg, and the strange man who steals the egg from her.

The other is a little title listed as "Warriors of the Wind." Now, any anime fan who is a real anime fans knows that *Warriors of the Wind* is one of the worst examples of what happened in the early days when anime was brought to the US. Originally Miyazaki's masterpiece *Nausicaa of the Valley of Wind*, *WotW* was chopped up, questionably dubbed, and saw a number of its characters renamed.

But wait, you say, shouldn't Disney have the rights to *Nausicaa*? Wasn't Miyazaki upset over the whole *Warriors of the Wind* tragedy, and swore that it wouldn't happen again? This was the question, and an update to the Anchor Bay website (after they were buried under e-mail with questions) helped to clear a few things up. They DO still have rights to *Nausicaa*, and will for some time. They also assured everyone that the movie will be complete and uncut. However, things like extras, languages, screen format, and the final name have yet to be finalized.

At the very least, we'll get an uncut version of a Miyazaki masterpiece that will hopefully have a better dub job. At best, we'll have a proper, dub and sub, "Nausicaa of the Valley of Wind" titled DVD that may just knock *Mononoke* off as the single coolest DVD anime release. This is FABULOUS news.

Cartoon Network News

The good news is that not one, but all THREE *Tenchi* titles will be showing up on the Cartoon Network—*Tenchi Universe*, *Tenchi in Tokyo*, and *Tenchi OVA*. The Tenchi run will begin on June 5th, the same day that Toonami expands, and will be running in that order (the entire *TU* series first, then *TiT*, then *TOVA*). Fans should look for Tenchi to sit in between *Sailor Moon* and *DragonBall Z*, and the inevitable will be happening—there will be some "editing for television" done, the hardest hit being the *Tenchi OVA* series (partially due to content, partially due to some episodes being 45 minutes in length).

And, for the record, the three *Tenchi* movies were NOT part of this deal. As of this point right now, the Cartoon Network has no plans for running any or all of the three movies.

Really good news for *Sailor Moon* fans. *Sailor Moon* will be on vacation by the time you read this—but will do so to get ready for a return which will also bring in the third season of the show! *SM* will be away until the Cartoon Network gets finished (as in editing and dubbing) third-season episodes from DiC, though a date for this has yet to be fully set (DiC supposedly keeps pushing the finish date back). People from the Cartoon Network have said that they are "pretty sure it's a done deal."

Finally, look for a possible run of anime movies shown as part of Toonami, as well as an all day "Toonami takes over the Cartoon Network" marathon later in the year.

Upcoming Bandai DVDs

April 1st
Cowboy Bebop DVD 1 (Eps. 1-5)—$29.98
Blue Submarine No. 6 DVD 1—$19.98
Eat-Man 98 DVD Collection (Eps. 1-12)—$39.98

May 1st
Gundam Wing DVD 1 (Eps. 1-5)—$24.98
Cowboy Bebop DVD 2 (Eps. 6-10)—$29.98
Haunted Junction DVD Collection (Eps. 1-12)—$39.98

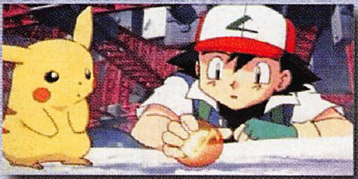
June 1st
Blue Submarine No. 6 DVD 2—$19.98
The Vision of Escaflowne DVD 1 (Eps. 1-4)—$29.98
Cowboy Bebop DVD 3 (Eps. 11-14)—$29.98

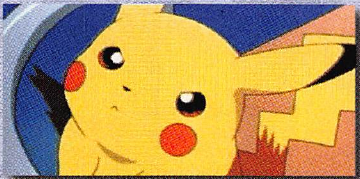
July 1st
Cowboy Bebop DVD 4 (Eps. 15-18)—$29.98
Gundam Wing DVD 2 (Eps. 6-10)—$24.98
Outlaw Star DVD 1 (Eps. 1-5)—$29.98

Pokemon 2000

Well, we've know for quite some time that it was coming—now Warner Brothers has given us all a first look at the next *Pokemon* movie. Titled *Pokemon the Movie 2000* (known in Japan as Revolution Lugia), the theatrical release is currently slated for July 21st. You can check out more on this summer's biggest event on the official *Pokemon the Movie 2000* website: *http://www.wbmovies.com/pokemon_2000/index.html*








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1996

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Sep	V4, I 9	$9.99
Aug	V4, I 8	$9.99
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Jun	V4, I 6	$9.99
May	V4, I 5	$9.99
Apr	V4, I 4	SOLD OUT
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1995

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Jun	V3, I 6	SOLD OUT
May	V3, I 5	$14.99
Apr	V3, I 4	SOLD OUT
Mar	V3, I 3	SOLD OUT
Feb	V3, I 2	SOLD OUT
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1994

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Jun	V2, I 6	SOLD OUT
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1993

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Oct	V1, I 10	SOLD OUT
Sep	V1, I 9	SOLD OUT
Aug	V1, I 8	$19.99
Jul	V1, I 7	$19.99
Jun	V1, I 6	SOLD OUT
May	V1, I 5	SOLD OUT
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Hocus Pocus

codes, hints & strategies

W*elcome to the pages of cheats, codes, and hints galore!!! Upon these leaves you will find all the assistance you'll need for the hottest games today. Not satisfied? Need help on another game? No problem! If you need codes or hints on any game, mail GameFan, or e-mail* hocus-pocus@gamefan.com. *Now, travel with thy controller in hand, to a place where cheaters prosper...*

Code of the Month!

Fear Effect

Instant death with all firearms: At the Options screen, select "Credits," and as the credits play, press L1, ▲, ↑, ↓, ●, ●, ▲, ■, ↓, R1.

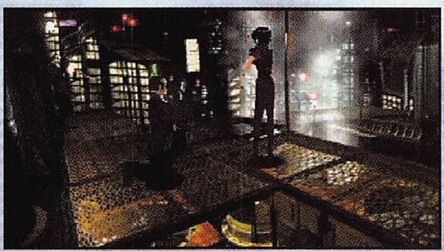
Expert mode: At the Options screen, select "Credits," and as the credits play, press ↓, ↓, ↓, ▲, ↓, ↓, ↓, ■, ←, →.

Instant puzzle solution: At the Options screen, select "Credits," and as the credits play, press L1, ▲, ↑, ↓, ●, ●, ●, ↓, ↓, ↓, ↑.

Infinite health: At the Options screen, select "Credits," and as the credits play, press L1, ▲, ↑ ↓, ●, ●, ▲, ■, →, ■.

Maximum ammunition: At the Options screen, select "Credits," and as the credits play, press L1, ▲, ↑, ↓, ●, ●, ▲, ■, ←, ▲.





PlayStation

Ace Combat 3: Electrosphere

Control replay camera: During a replay, pressing ■, ▲, ●, ✖, R1 or L1 will change the camera angles. Pressing R2 will add a motion blur effect, while pressing L2 will darken the screen.

Unlock the Mission Simulator: Finish the game five times with five different endings on the same save data. After the fifth ending, Simon will unlock the Mission Simulator.

Army Men: Sarge's Heroes

All weapons: During gameplay, pause the game and press ■, ●, R1, and L1. Unpause the game, and you should have all weapons with infinite ammunition.

Crash Team Racing

The following codes must be entered at the main menu. If entered correctly, an audible tone will sound. These codes do not affect the Adventure mode.

Unlock Dr. N. Tropy: Hold L1 + R1 and press ↓, ←, →, ↑, ↓, →, →.
Unlock Kodomo Joe: Hold L1 + R1 and press ↓, ●, ←, ←, ▲, →, ↓.
Unlock Papu Papu: Hold L1 + R1 and press ←, ▲, →, ↓, →, ●, ←, ←, ↓.
Unlock Penta Penguin: Hold L1 + R1 and press ↓, →, ▲, ↓, ←, ▲, ↑.
Unlock Pinstripe: Hold L1 + R1 and press ←, →, ▲, ↓, →, ↓.
Unlock Ripper Roo: Hold L1 + R1 and press →, ●, ●, ↓, ↑, ↓, →.
Infinite Bombs: Hold L1 + R1 and press ▲, →, ↓, →, ↑, ▲, ←.
Infinite Masks: Hold L1 + R1 and press ←, ▲, →, ←, ●, →.
Infinite Wumpa Fruits: Hold L1 + R1 and press ↓, →, →, ↓, ↓.
Super Turbo Pads: Hold L1 + R1 and press ▲, →, →, ●, ←.
Unlock Scrapbook: Hold L1 + R1 and press ↑, ↑, ↓, →, →, ←, →, ▲, →.
Unlock Turbo Track: Hold L1 + R1 and press →, →, ←, ▲, →, ↓, ↓.

Die Hard Trilogy 2

Shooting mode codes

During gameplay, pause the game and enter the following commands for the respective codes:

Invincibility: ▲, ▲, ●, ●, L1, L2.
All weapons: ■, ■, ●, ●, L1, L2.
Infinite ammunition: L1, L1, R1, R1, ●, ●.

Driving mode codes

During gameplay, pause the game and press the following commands for the respective codes:

Invincibility: ▲, ▲, ●, ●, L1, L2.
Infinite Nitro: L1, L1, R1, R1, ●, ●.
Infinite time: L1, R1, ■, ■, R1, L1.
Rainy weather: ■, ■, L1, L1, ▲, ●.

Third-person codes

All of the following codes work in the third-person sequences. Pause the game and press the following buttons for the respective codes:

Invincibility: ▲, ▲, ●, ●, L1, L2.
All weapons: ■, ■, ●, ●, L1, L1.
Infinite ammo: L1, L1, R1, R1, ●, ●.
Big head mode: R1, R1, L1, L1, ▲, ▲.
Skeleton mode: ●, ■, ▲, ▲, ■, ●.
Pop Top mode: ■, ■, ●, ●, R1, R1.
Funk mode: ●, ●, ■, ■, L1, L1.

Level select
At the main menu, press L1, L1, ●, ●, ■ and ■. A level select screen should be displayed.

First-person view
During gameplay, pause the game and press ●, ●, ▲, ▲, ■, ■. The message "cheat enabled" will be displayed.

Fear Effect

Instant death with all firearms: At the Options screen, select "Credits," and as the credits play, press L1, ▲, ↑, ↓, ●, ●, ▲, ■, ↓, R1.

Expert mode: At the Options screen, select "Credits," and as the credits play, press ↓, ↓, ↓, ▲, ↓, ↓, ↓, ■, ←, →.

Instant puzzle solution: At the Options screen, select "Credits," and as the credits play, press L1, ▲, ↑, ↓, ●, ●, ●, ↓, ↓, ↓, ↑.

Infinite health: At the Options screen, select "Credits," and as the credits play, press L1, ▲, ↑ ↓, ●, ●, ▲, ■, →, ■.

Maximum ammunition: At the Options screen, select "Credits," and as the credits play, press L1, ▲, ↑, ↓, ●, ●, ▲, ■, ←, ▲.

Guilty Gear

Hard mode: Hold ↓ + ■ + L1 + R2 and the "Power" button on the PlayStation. Continue to hold the buttons until the phrase "Team Neo Blood" disappears.

Unlock Testament and Justice: Beat the game with any character. Testament and Justice will be available in Versus and Training modes.

Unlock Baiken: Choose Ky or Sol and beat the game without using any continues. Once you've beaten Baiken, she will be available in Versus and Training modes.

Hot Shots Golf

Mirror Courses: Highlight a course at the course selection screen, then hold L1 + L2 and press ✖.

Switch Hitting: Press L1 + R1 + ✖ while choosing a golfer. This will change the golfer to the opposite hand.

Unlock all players and courses: Hold L1 + L2 + R1 + R2 on the second controller. When the logo appears, press ↑, ↑, ↓, ↑, ←, →, →, ←, ↑, ↑, ↓, ↑, ←, →, →, ← (still holding the four shoulder buttons).

Legacy of Kain: Soul Reaver

Note: Each of the following is entered at the pause screen, while holding L1 or R1:

Aerial Reaver: ✖, →, ↑, ↑, ▲, ←, ←, →, ↑.
Constrict: ↓, ↑, →, →, ●, ↑, ↑, ↓.
Debug mode: ↑, ↑, ↓, →, →, ←, ●, →, ←, ↓.
Fire Glyph: ↑, ↑, →, ↑, ▲, L2, →.
Fire Reaver: ↓, ↑, →, ↑, ↓, ←, ●, →, ↓.
Force: ←, →, ●, ←, →, ←.
Force Glyph: ↓, ←, ▲, ↓, ↑.
Hurt Raziel: ←, ●, ↑, ↑, ↓.
Kain Reaver: ✖, ●, →, ▲, ←, ←, →, ↑.
Make Fire Reaver: ▲, →, ↓, ●, ↑.
Maximum magic: ▲, →, ↓, →, ↑, ▲, ←.
Pass through barriers: ↓, ●, ●, ←, →, ▲, ↑.
Shift at any time: ↑, ↑, ↓, →, →, ←, ●, →, ←, ↓.
Soul Reaver: ↓, ▲, L2, →, →, ↓, ↓, ←, ▲, ↓, →.
Sound Glyph: →, →, ↓, ●, ↑, ↑, ↓.
Stone Glyph: ↓, ●, ↑, ←, ↓, →, →.
Sunlight Glyph: ←, ●, ←, →, →, ↑, ↑, ←.
Upgrade health to next level: →, ✖, ←, ▲, ↑, ↓.
Wall climbing: ▲, ↓, L2, →, ↑, ↓.
Water Glyph: ↓, ●, ↑, ↓, →.

NASCAR Rumble

All tracks and legend drivers: To unlock all the tracks and legend drivers Up to Pro level, enter the Options screen, and at the Load and Save feature, choose to enter a password, then enter "C9P5AU8NAA".

Street Sk8er 2

Unlock all characters: ←, ←, ●, ●, L2, ■, →, R2.
Unlock all tracks: ←, →, ←, →, ●, ●, R1, ■.
Max out player's status/trick level: L1, ■, ←, ←, R2, ←, R1, ←.
Unlock "View Movies" menu item: R2, R2, L1, L2, L1, R1, R1, R1.
Unlock All Boards: ●, ●, ■, ●, ■, ■, ●, R1
Change character clothing: When selecting character, press and hold L1, L2, R1 or R2.

Speed Punks

Extra Racers
Race as Cosworth: Finish in first place in all races in the 'Easy' tournament, then defeat Cosworth at Millennium Park.

Race as Tetsuo: Finish in first place in all races in the 'Medium' tournament, then defeat Tetsuo at City One.

Race as Beamer: Finish in first place in all races in the 'Hard' tournament.

Syphon Filter 2

Super Agent mode: Pause the game and highlight "Weaponry." Then, hold L2 + Select + ● + ■ + ✖ simultaneously. If you enter the code correctly, you will hear a sound. Then, enter the Options screen and choose the "Cheats" selection.

Movie Theater: During gameplay, pause the game and highlight the "Briefing" option. Then, press and hold → + L1 + R2 + ● + ✖. A high-pitched sound should confirm the code. Now, go to the "Cheats" section in Options, and you should see two new features to view all Disc 1 and Disc 2 movies.

Skip To End of Level: During gameplay, pause the game, highlight the "Map" option, then hold → + L2 + R2 + ● + ■ + ✖. Now, enter the Options screen and choose the new "Cheats" option.

Thrasher: Skate And Destroy

Extra hidden boards

To use the hidden boards in the game, enter the following as your name before you start a game.

Snowman board: ZAXIS
Copenhagen board: MARDUK
Rockstar board: ROCKSTAR

Bee-suited skater: At the character select screen, select Roach, and enter "Beesuitguy" as his name. You'll be playing as a bumblebee-costumed skater with awesome jumping ability.

Tony Hawk's Pro Skater

Neversoft Bails FMV: Win a gold medal in all three skateboarding competitions with Officer Dick, and you'll be treated to a very interesting "Neversoft Bails" FMV sequence.

Cheat Codes

To activate a cheat, pause the game and hold L1 while entering a code below (note: a shaking screen confirms correct entry).

Score multiplier: ▲, ▲, ✖, ▲.
All attributes are 13 points: ✖, ■, ■, ▲, ↑, ↓.
All attributes are 10 points: ■, ▲, ↑, ↓.
All practice areas: ■, ↑, ←, ↑, ●, ▲.
Big Head mode*: ■, ●, ↑, ←, ←.
Unlock everything: ●, →, ↑, ↓, ●, →, ↑, ■, ▲.
Level select: ▲, →, ↑, ■, ▲, ←, ↑, ■, ▲.
Start from random locations: ■, ●, ✖, ↑, ↓.
Unlimited specials: ✖, ▲, ●, ↓, ↑, →.
Meter always full: ✖, ▲, ●, ↓, ↑, →.

Special Moves

Tony Hawk
Kickflip McTwist: →, →, ●
540 Board Varial: ←, ←, ●
360 flip to mute: ↓, →, ■
The 900: →, ↓, ●

Bob Burnquist
Backflip: ↑, ↓, ●
One-Footed Smith Grind: →, →, ▲
Burntwist: ←, ↑, ▲

Geoff Rowley
Backflip: Down, ↑ ●
Double Hardflip: →, ↓, ■
Darkslide: ←, →, ▲

Bucky Lasek
Kickflip McTwist: →, →, ●
Fingerflip Airwalk: ←, →, ●
Varial Heelflip Judo: ↓, ↑, ■

Chad Muska
Front Flip: ↓, ↑, ●
One Foot Thumpin': →, ↓, ▲
360 Shove-It Rewind: →, →, ■

Kareem Kambell
Front Flip: Down, ↑, ●
Casper Slide: ↑, ↓, ▲
Kickflip Underflip: ←, →, ■

Andrew Reynolds
Backflip: Down, ↑, ●
Heelflip Bluntslide: ↓, ↓, ▲
Triple Kickflip: ←, ←, ■

Rune Glifberg
Kickflip McTwist: →, →, ●
Christ Air: ←, →, ●
Triple Kickflip: ↑, ↓, ■

Jamie Thomas
Front Flip: ↑, ↓, ●
One-Foot Nosegrind: ↑, ↑, ▲
540 Flip: ←, ↓, ■

Elissa Steamer
Backflip: ↑, ↓, ●
One-foot Nosegrind: ←, ←, ▲
540 Flip: ←, ↓, ●

Officer Dick
Yeehaw Front Flip: ↓, ↑, ●
Assume the Position: ←, ←, ●
Neckbreak Grind: ←, →, ▲

Triple Play 2001

EA Dream Team: To get the EA Sports Dream Team, select the "Single Game" option from the main menu. Now, press ←, →, ←, →, ←, →, ←, →, ←, →, ←, → at the team selection screen. The phrase "Triple Play Baseball" will be spoken to confirm correct code entry.

Twisted Metal 4

Enter any of the following at the password screen. Laughter will sound when a code is entered correctly.

God mode: ↓, ←, L1, ←, →.
Unlock Sweet Tooth: Start, R1, →, →, ←.
Unlock Crusher: ↓, R1, →, R1, L1.
Unlock Moon Buggy: Start, ▲, →, L1, Start.
Unlock RC Car: ↑, ↓, ←, Start, →.
Unlock Super Auger: ←, ●, ▲, →, ↓.
Unlock Super Axel: ↑, →, ↓, ↑, L1.
Unlock Super Thumper: ●, ▲, Start, ●, ←.
Unlock Super Slamm: →, L1, Start ●, Start.

WCW Mayhem

Thursday Thunder PPV: At the PPV password screen, enter "PLYHDNGYS" and press X. Then, enter "MSKDLTLRY" on the next line for the special Thursday Thunder PPV.

Select Backstage arena: To unlock all the hidden rooms, enter "CBCKRMS" as a PPV password, then select the room you wish to fight in at Match Options on the Match SetUp screen (to fight Backstage, wrestlers must leave the ring and make their way toward the entrance).

Available rooms: Backstage arenas, boiler room, first aid room, locker room, parking lot, press room, storage room, ticket office.

Thunder PPV: Enter the codes "PLYHDNGYS" and "MSKDLTLRY" under each other, and you'll get a PPV code.

Cheat Codes

To activate a cheat, enter the corresponding code as a Pay-Per-View password.

All wrestlers: PLYHDNGYS
Classic TNT Nitro set: PLYNTRCLSC
Created wrestlers may have attributes set to full: MKSPRCWS
Halloween Havoc: DPLGNGRS
Momentum meter: PRNTMMNTM
Move Up in rank: CHT4DBST
Stamina meter: PRNTSTMN
Wrestle as an obese Billy Kidman: NGGDYNLN
Wrestle as Rey Mysterio, Jr.: MSKDLTLRY

WipeOut 3

Set your "Default Name" as one of the following to received the desired effect.

Unlock all tracks: WIZZPIG
Unlock Phantom class: JAZZNAZ
Unlock more ships: AVINIT
Unlock all challenges: THEHAIR
White Speed Pads: EBEBDEE
Unlock prototype courses: CANER_W
Infinite Hyperthrust: MOONFACE
Infinite random weapons (press Square while playing to change): DEPUTY
Unlock all tournaments: BUNTY
Infinite shields and Hyperthrust: GEORDIE

Wu-Tang: Shaolin Style

To unlock every fighter, press the following code at the main menu: →, →, →, →, ←, ←, ←, ←, ■, ●, ■, ●.

WWF Smackdown

Bonus Wrestlers

Go into Season mode, and as you finish each year, the following new wrestlers will be unlocked:

Ivory: 1 year
Prince Albert: 2 years
Jacqueline: 3 years
Viscera: 4 years
Mideon: 6 years
Gerald Brisco: 7 years
Pat Patterson: 8 years

Nintendo 64

All-Star Baseball 2000

Enter the following codes at the Cheats option in the main menu:

Big baseball: BCHBLKTPTY
Players fly away when out: FLYAWAY
Sherbert Stadium: MYEYES
Small players: TOMTHUMB
Smoking balls: WLDWLDWST
Dark Stadium: WTOTL

Castlevania: Legacy of Darkness

Play as Henry: Finish the game on any difficulty, and save your game after the credits finish. Henry should now be playable; his mission is to save six children within seven days.

Play as Reinhardt: To play as Reinhardt, save at least one child in the Henry minigame.

Monopoly 64

Play as Mr. Potato Head: Name the moneybag token "Potato" to play as everyone's favorite spud.

Pokémon Stadium

Extra Cool Stuff

Surfing Pikachu: Finish the game to get the surfing Pikachu (with blue eyes).

Game Boy Tower: To get into the GB Tower, complete the Prime Cup and the Poké Cup. Now, you should be able to play your Pokémon game for Game Boy on the Nintendo 64 in the GB Tower.

Extra Damage: After performing a fighting move, hold A when the move description appears.

Black Pokémon: At the game title screen, quickly press ↑, ↑, ↑, →, ↑, ←, ↓. Directly after, you should hear a loud "Pica pica." Now, all of your Pokémon are black or darker than normal.

All Pokémon: If you win the tournament on 'Hard,' you can get all the Pokémon (including all Pokégods).

Quake 2

Cool Colors: Select 'Single' on the mode screen, and 'Load' on the Game Start screen. When asked to create a game note on the Controller Pak, choose not to use, then enter "S3TCOOLCOLORS???". An alternate color palette will appear in the game.

Infinite Shots: Select 'Single' on the mode screen, and 'Load' on the Game Start screen. When asked to create a game note on the Controller Pak, choose not to use, then enter "S3T1NF1N1T3SHOTS". You'll have unlimited ammo in multi-player mode.

Ridge Racer 64

Galaga '88 mini game: Complete the *Ridge Racer* Extreme Extra race in first place to access the classic *Galaga '88* game.

Hidden golf cart
To get the Super-fast golf cart, start a game in Grand Prix mode and select the first track. As the race begins, drive Forward a few seconds, then turn around so you're going the wrong way. Build up enough speed (to at least fourth gear) to go through the wall, and you'll be racing a reverse track. Finish first, and you'll get the golf cart.

South Park Rally

Extra Characters
Place first in the following races in order to unlock the following extra characters:

Mr. Garrison: Defeat Rally Days #2
Mr. Mackey: Defeat Spring Cleaning
Big Gay Al: Defeat Pink Lemonade
Mephesto: Defeat 4th of July
Grandpa: Defeat Halloween
Jesus: Defeat Christmas
Satan: Defeat New Year's Day
Ned: Defeat 4th of July with Kyle
Damien: Defeat Halloween with Kenny

Super Smash Bros.

Sound Test: Beat all the Bonus Practice 2 modes, and you'll reach the Sound Test screen in the Data section.

Borrow a life (multi-player): In multi-player mode, if you die and want to borrow a life from a teammate that has a extra life, press A + B + Z + Start.

Play as Ness: To play as Ness, beat the single-player mode with any character, with the number of starting lives set to '3' and the difficulty set to 'NORMAL.' You must beat the game without continuing.

Play as Luigi: To play as Luigi, pass the Bonus Practice 1 with at least eight main characters. When Luigi challenges you, defeat him, and he's yours.

Play as Jigglypuff: If you want to get the Pokémon Jigglypuff (and gosh, don't we all?), all you have to do is beat the game, and then you'll face her in battle. If you beat her, you'll be able to select her in the game.

Play as Captain Falcon: To play as Captain Falcon, you must beat the game on any difficulty in UNDER 20 MINUTES. After that, Captain Falcon will challenge you. Once you beat him, you'll be able to select him as a character.

Change Outfits: You can change your character's outfits by tapping the four C buttons at the character select screen. Some costume changes are limited to colors, but characters like Pikachu are also available with a hat.

Top Gear Overdrive

Bonus Cars: At the main menu screen, highlight "Credits" and press Z twice, highlight "Versus" and press Z once, highlight "Credits" and press Z once, highlight "Setup" and press Z once, highlight "Championship" and press Z three times, and finally, highlight "Setup" and press Z once. If done properly, you'll hear a confirmation sound, and a smiley face will appear at the bottom of the screen.

Vigilante 8: Second Offense

Invincibility: At the password screen, enter "ELBICNIVNI".

All Characters: At the password screen, enter "LLA_KCOLNU" .

Cheat Codes
Enter as a password:

Arcade mode single play: HOME_ALONE
Awesome missiles: BLAST_FIRE
Fast cars: MORE_SPEED
Faster Action mode: QUICK_PLAY
Rapid-fire play: RAPID_FIRE
Huge wheels: GO_MONSTER
Light cars: HI_CEILING
Major attack by enemies: UNDER_FIRE
Zero-gravity mode: NO_GRAVITY
No wheel attachment icon: DRIVE_ONLY
Rammer car mode: GO_RAMMING
Remove cheats: NO_CODE
Show end FMVs: LONG_MOVIE
Slow-Mo mode: GO_SLOW_MO
Tall Cars mode: JACK_IT_UP
Tall suspension: JACK_IT_UP
Use same cars in multi-player mode: MIXES_CARS

WCW Mayhem

PPV Passwords
At the PPV password screen, enter the following for the respective codes:

World War III 1999: yKh#J$=JQLmFs
Halloween Havoc 1999: td^pKRmZ-
Starrcade 1999 PPV: @KcXKF=W?j^pF
Superbrawl 2000 PPV: rJPmB6lfMlk$B

Additional Cheat Codes

To activate a cheat, enter its corresponding code as a Pay-Per-View password.

Momentum print enabled: PRNTMMNTM
Stamina print enabled: PRNTSTMN
Testcase1 unlocked**: NGGDYNLN
Masked little Rey enabled: MSKDLTLRY

Hidden Rooms: Non-ring fights WITHOUT a code require both opponents to jump out of the ring and head toward the Back of the arena.

For non-ring fights WITH a code, "CBCKRMS" must be entered as a Pay-Per-View password.

Available rooms: boiler room, first aid room, locker room, parking lot, press room, ticket office, storage room.

Classic TNT Nitro Set: To unlock "Nitro," enter "PLYNTRCLSC" as a Pay-Per-View password.

Multiple Codes

All Backrooms: Enter "CBCKRMS" as a password at the PPV password screen to unlock all Backstage areas under match options.

All wrestlers: Enter "PLYHDNGYS" as a password at the PPV password screen to unlock all bonus wrestlers.

Play as same wrestlers: Enter "DPLGNGRS" as a password at the PPV password screen to play as the same wrestler as your opponent in Versus mode.

Super created wrestlers: Enter "MKSPRCWS" as a password at the PPV password screen to create wrestlers with full attributes.

Quest for the Best mode: Enter "CHT4DBST" as a password at the PPV password screen to unlock.

Dreamcast

Crazy Taxi

Disable arrow indicators: Select any mode and any amount of time. Now, before the character select screen appears, hold R Shift and Start.

Disable destination indicator: Select any mode and any amount of time. Now, before the character select screen appears, hold L Shift and Start.

Port 3 Hidden Options

Plug a controller into the third Dreamcast controller port and start the game. During gameplay, press the Start button on that controller, and you'll be able to access the following hidden options by pressing the corresponding buttons on the controller plugged into port 3:

First-person mode: Press the B button to access this view. Press A to return to normal view mode.
Dynamic camera mode: Press the Y button to access this view. Press A to return to normal view mode.
Speedometer: Press the X button five times, and a speedometer will appear in the lower right corner.

Taxi Bike: To get the Taxi Bike without having to finish all the Crazy Boxes, select either Arcade or Original mode, and at the character select screen, press L Shift, R Shift, L Shift, R Shift, L Shift and R Shift. You MUST press this sequence of buttons quickly. There's a timing to the L and R

Shift button sequence, and doing it too slow or way too fast will prevent you from unlocking the Taxi Bike. Now, select your character, and if you input the code correctly, you'll hear a bicycle bell. Now, you'll be riding on the super quick and light taxi bike!

Another Day: To play the game starting in the other part of town, press R Shift twice and hold R Shift at the Character Selection screen. Now, select any character, and you'll start the game facing the other part of the town called "Another Day."
Expert Mode: To play in the 'Expert' level (with no stop indicators or arrows to guide you), press and hold L + R Trigger and Start button after the Mode Selection screen. The words "Expert" should appear at the bottom left corner of the Character Select screen.

Chu Chu Rocket
Unlock Chao's: Beat all 25 Stage Challenge mode levels to unlock the feature that changes the mice to Sonic Adventure chao's!

Angels: Once you complete all 25 'Mania' mode puzzles, you can change the mice to the small angels found in the Saturn game *NiGHTS*.

New Puzzle Modes: When you beat the 'Normal' mode puzzles, you will unlock the 'Hard' mode puzzles. After you finish all 25 'Hard' mode puzzles, you will unlock the 'Special' mode puzzles. Finally, beat all 25 'Special' mode puzzles, and you will unlock 'Mania' mode puzzles.

Dead Or Alive 2
All Taunts: All of these taunts are done during gameplay:
Tina: Back, Forward, Back + Free Button + Punch + Kick
Down, Down + Free + Punch + Kick
Bass: Back, Forward, Back + Free + Punch + Kick
Down, Down + Free + Punch + Kick
Gen-Fu: Back, Forward, Back + Free + Punch + Kick
Down, Down + Free + Punch + Kick
In Costume 2, Down, Down + Free + Punch + Kick (takes off hat)
Lei Fang: Forward, Back, Forward + Free + Punch + Kick
Back, Forward, Back + Free + Punch + Kick
Down, Down + Free + Punch + Kick
Back, Back + Free + Punch + Kick
Kasumi: Back, Forward, Back + Free + Punch + Kick
Ein: Back, Forward, Back + Free + Punch + Kick
Down, Down + Free + Punch + Kick
Leon: Back, Forward, Back + Free + Punch + Kick
Ayane: Back, Forward, Back + Free + Punch + Kick
Down, Down + Free + Punch + Kick
Zack: Back, Forward, Back + Free + Punch + Kick
Down, Down + Free + Punch + Kick (note: In his shiny outfit, any taunt will turn on the light on top of his head)
Helena: Back, Forward, Back + Free + Punch + Kick
Ryu Hayabusa: Back, Forward, Back + Free + Punch + Kick
Forward, Back, Forward + Free + Punch + Kick
Down, Down + Free + Punch + Kick
Jan Lee: Back, Forward, Back + Free + Punch + Kick

Extra fireflies in Arial Gardens: To see more fireflies in the Arial Garden level, choose the Arial Garden level by pressing either Y or R Trigger at the Versus Select screen.

Control replay camera: After you defeat your opponent but before the instant replay begins, press and hold the Kick and Free buttons. Then, when the instant replay starts, press Punch to rewind it.

Extra Artwork: Place the *Dead or Alive 2* CD in your PC CD-ROM and access the CD; there's a folder named "BONUS" with eight images of the female fighters in bikinis.

ECW: Hardcore Revolutio
Extra Wrestlers

Wrestle as Joey Styles: Win the Acclaim belt in career mode.
Wrestle as Joel Gertner: Win the Acclaim belt in career mode.
Wrestle as Tommy Rich: Win the ECW World TV belt in career mode.
Wrestle as Cyrus The Virus: Win the ECW World TV belt in career mode.
Wrestle as Taz: Win the ECW World Heavyweight belt in career mode.
Wrestle as Louie Spicolli: Win the ECW World Heavyweight belt in career mode.

Sega Sports: NHL 2K
Black Box Team: To enable the big heads (all except the goalie), have a controller plugged into port D. Now, start the game, and when the Black Box logo appears, press and hold the shoulder buttons on the fourth controller (plugged into port D) and press B, B, X. You should hear the announcer say, "Oh, black box, baby!" Now, the Black Box Team will be selectable.

Big head: To enable the big heads (all except the goalie), have a controller plugged into port D. Now, start the game, and when the Black Box logo appears, press and hold the shoulder buttons on the fourth controller (plugged into port D) and press B, A, B, Y. You should hear the announcer say, "Oh, black box, baby!" Now, all the players except the goalie will have big heads.

Hidden Team Black Box Pictures: Go into the Custom Players feature and enter any names of the Black Box development team. Almost all the names will display a picture of the team member (go to page 27 of the instruction manual); these include the programmers, tool users and animators.

Special Wayne Gretzky Message: Go to the "Custom Player" feature and create a player with the name "Wayne Gretzky." When you insert this player on a team, go to "Edit Lines," and check his photo for a special message.

Soul Fighter
Lots o' codes

At the *Soul Fighter* title screen, press Left and Y. Go to the options menu, and exit back to the title screen. You should see a code screen; now, press the following buttons to unlock the following codes:

ABXXYA: Max health
XAAYBB: All weapons
AABXYA: Level 2
XAYAAB: Level 3
YYBAXA: Level 4
BABXXY: Level 5
XAXBYY: Level 6
ABXBYB: Level 7
YBBAXY: Level 8
BYAAXB: Level 9
XABBAX: Level 10
YBYXAB: Level 11
XBAXBY: Level 12

Vigilante 8: Second Offense
Invincibility: At the password screen, enter "ELBICNIVNI".

Original *V8* Levels: Enter "OLD_LEVELS" as a password to unlock all original *V8* levels.

All Characters: Enter "LLA_KCOLNUI" as a password to unlock all the characters.

Cheat Codes
To enter passwords, go to the Options screen, highlight Game Status, hold L + R and press A twice.

Arcade mode single play: HOME_ALONE
Awesome missiles: BLAST_FIRE
Fast cars: MORE_SPEED
Faster Action mode: QUICK_PLAY
Get rapid-fire play: RAPID_FIRE
Huge wheels: GO_MONSTER
Light cars: HI_CEILING
Major attack by enemies: UNDER_FIRE
Zero-gravity mode: NO_GRAVITY
No wheel attachment icon: DRIVE_ONLY
Rammer Car mode: GO_RAMMING
Remove cheats: NO_CODE
Show end FMVs: LONG_MOVIE
Slow-Mo mode: GO_SLOW_MO
Tall Cars mode: JACK_IT_UP
Tall suspension: JACK_IT_UP
Use same cars in multi-player mode: MIXES_CARS

Virtual On: Oratorio Tangram
Special Alpha Raiden: To get the new "Alpha Version" of Raiden in *VOOT*, beat the game on any difficulty with Raiden in fog mode without continuing. After you finish the game, the game should auto-save. Now, go into Dreamcast 5.45 mode, and at the Virtuaroid select screen, highlight the following robots in this order and press the Left Turbo button "X" number of times, depending on the robot. The sequence goes like this:

Apharmd-B (once), Apharmd-S (once), Dordray (twice), Specineff (twice), Fei-Yen Kn (twice), Cypher (three)

You should hear a confirmation sound after you press the Left Turbo button three times on Cypher. Go to Raiden, and he should appear in a white and yellow palette. He controls pretty much the same as regular

Raiden, except he's missing ALL his Turbo attacks, he can't air dash, can't "watari" dash... so essentially, he's Raiden from *Virtual On: Cybertroopers* with a double jump and dashing close combat attacks.

Special Alpha Temjin Version: To get the new "Alpha Version" of Temjin in *VOOT*, beat the game on any difficulty with Temjin in fog mode without continuing. After you finish the game, the game should auto-save. Now, go into Dreamcast 5.45 mode, and at the Virtuaroid select screen, highlight the following robots in this order and press the Left Turbo button x number of times, depending on the robot. The sequence goes like this:

Temjin (once), Random Select (once), Raiden (twice), Bal Bados (twice), Angelan (twice), Grys-Vok (three times)

You should hear a confirmation sound after you press the Left Turbo button three times on Grys-Vok. Go to Temjin, and he should appear in a white and yellow palette. He controls pretty much the same as regular Temjin, except he's missing ALL his Turbo attacks, he can't air dash, can't "watari" dash... so essentially, he's Temjin from *Virtual On: Cybertroopers*, with a double jump and dashing close combat attacks.

Secret Bal Bados weapon vs. Tangram: When playing Bal Bados against Tangram (the last boss), Bal Bados has a secret "Black Hole Bomb" that can only be performed on Tangram's stage. To use it, eject both of Bal Bados' arms (Left Turbo + Left Weapon attack, Left Turbo + Right Weapon attack), then press both weapon attack buttons + Right Turbo. Bal Bados' arms will form an energy ball that does 25% damage against Tangram.

Special CG ending: To get the special CG ending, finish the game with each character in Dreamcast 5.45 mode without continuing. When you do this with the last character, the special CG ending will play.

Note: You don't have to finish the game with Ajim for the special CG ending to play. Also, if you're having problems with the last boss, plug a second controller in, and if you're dying at the last boss, press the Start button on Controller 2 to challenge yourself. This doesn't affect the code to get the special CG ending.

Play as Ajim: Start a game in any mode (Dreamcast or Arcade), choose any character and play the game using "chicken tactics" (i.e., running away constantly, always winning by time, not attacking when you're ahead, etc.). If you do this right, Ajim will come out anytime after your first match (sometimes even twice) and challenge you. You have to beat him (not an easy feat) and finish the rest of the game without continuing.

Now, once this is done, save your game, and open the lid to your Dreamcast to access the DC system menu. Go into the system settings, and change the date for both the system and VMU to 4-29-2000. Once this is done, close the lid and start a game in either Dreamcast 5.45 or Arcade 5.2 modes. At the select screen, highlight the Random Select icon, and press and hold the X button (Left Turbo), then press and hold the B button (Right Turbo). Ajim should now appear! Press the trigger buttons to select him, and you'll be playing a toned-down version of Ajim.

Play Against Ajim: To play against the penalty character Ajim, start a game in any mode and continually win by time. It also helps to play machi-style: when ahead, don't attack, hiding and dodging the enemy's attacks. Ajim will appear anywhere after the first match and before the final boss, Tangram.

Arcade 5.2 mode: To play the very first version of *Virtual On: Oratorio Tangram*, finish the game with every character. Then, Arcade 5.2 mode will be selectable at the main menu. The main differences include a different look to the Public Port level, as well as character weapon changes (i.e., Angelan can shoot three ice shields).

Wild Metal

Skip levels: During gameplay, press ↑, →, B, Y, ↓, ←.
Friendly AI units: During gameplay, press B, ↓, A, ↓, X, Y.
Show all token locations: During gameplay, press Y, B, A, ←, ↓, ↓.
Speed boost: During gameplay, press ↑, X, ↓, B, A, Y.
All weapons: During gameplay, press A, A, →, Y, A, →. All the weapons in the game should now be available.
Invincibility: During gameplay, press →, B, ←, X, ↓. You should now be invincible.
Full health: During gameplay, press ↓, ↓, A, X, B, X. Any health lost should now be restored.



Advertiser's Index

You Don't Know... Seaman?!?

Sega of America recently hinted that it'll be teaming up with Jellyvision (the same crew behind the cult classic *You Don't Know Jack*) for the upcoming U.S. localization of *Seaman* for the Dreamcast. Full details on the partnership have not been disclosed, but you can bet that Jellyvision's unique comic style will be well represented in Sega's talking fish simulation.

Oni: Coming Soon to a PS2 Near You!

Rockstar Games has announced that it's developing Bungie Software's *Oni* for the PlayStation 2. Rockstar's developing the title internally in conjunction with Bungie Software, which will develop the title for release on PC and Mac formats. All formats of this highly anticipated game will be released simultaneously in the fall of 2000.

Konami Plans 100 Releases For The Year 2000?!

Yes, you read that correctly: Konami of Japan's announced that it will unleash a whopping 100 games worldwide in the fiscal year 2000. Here's the breakdown of platform titles:

- PlayStation 41
- Game Boy 26
- PlayStation 2 25
- Dreamcast 5
- Nintendo 64 3

Hey, We Want Some Poo-Chi!

Japanese e-commerce site E-Sakai has begun taking pre-orders for Sega's upcoming toy dog, Poo-Chi. The store is offering the mechanical four-legged friend for a mere 2,900 yen... sure beats the five grand Sony's asking for its plastic pet. Poo-Chi should be available in Japan by mid-April, and according to rumor, will hit the States just in time for Christmas.

Resident Evil Zero Gets a Date

As mentioned in OS a few months back, Capcom of Japan's officially announced that the upcoming *Resident Evil* prequel, *Biohazard Zero*, will ship in the Land of the Rising Sun this summer. If you're unfamiliar with the upcoming N64 cartridge, *Biohazard Zero*'s story revolves around Rebecca Chambers, the newest member of the S.T.A.R.S. team. From what we've seen, this one will definitely be worth importing!

Sony Says: No American DVDs For You!

As soon as the word slipped out that you could trick the PlayStation 2 into playing Region 1 (American) DVD movies, it was only a matter of time before Sony acted... The next shipment of PS2s will sport a new utility disc that features an updated version of the DVD driver—aptly titled "1.01"—and will also be available at retailers.

How Sony intends on preventing people from just using the original drivers to play American DVD flicks is unknown and impossible, unless the company plans on rigging the new batches of hardware...

Namco Drills Dreamcast Owners

Namco delivered a doozy on the Dreamcast with the gorgeous *Soul Calibur*, and it was no secret that the game wouldn't be its last release for Sega's wonder boy. Namco's next offering is no secret, either—it's *Mr. Driller*, a cutie-pie puzzler that's high on entertainment. This game could certainly make a splash, but it's probably not exactly what DC owners were hoping for. It looks like *Ridge Racer DC* and *Tekken Tag Dreams* will have to wait.

Dino Planet Sounds Good to the N64

Here's a juicy tidbit for all you Rare fans: As mentioned last month, *Dinosaur Planet* is indeed a go, and it's gonna sound sweet. The oft-rumored Rare title was given a much-needed shot of legitimacy when it appeared on a list of N64 titles that'll employ Dolby's Pro Logic Surround Sound (*Banjo-Tooie* and *Conker's Bad Fur Day* were also featured on the list).

We expect Rare to come clean at E3 and officially debut the title—in fact, we wouldn't be surprised if Nintendo demanded it of the U.K. developer. As Dreamcast games start looking sweeter than ever and the PlayStation 2 makes its big American splash, the Big N needs all the headliners it can get...

Dolphin Coming to America in 2001

Sony's PlayStation 2 is burning up Japan. Microsoft has officially announced the X-Box. What's Nintendo, your favorite video game magnate, to do? Why, delay its next-gen system, of course! In a move that should surprise nobody, Nintendo recently issued a statement that confirmed a 2001 release for the Dolphin in America.

The exact launch date was not disclosed, but Nintendo affirms that it will be in the first half of 2001. So, that's not too much farther away than what could've been a late holiday release... The extra time will give Nintendo the chance to build a launch library to surpass even the Dreamcast's impressive launch lineup. Finalized dev kits are winging their way to American third-party developers as we speak, and that gives the best and brightest minds outside of Nintendo's umbrella a full year to create the best games they can (if not port their high-end PC and PS2 projects and add a little extra flair along the way).

Another solid reason for the delay (and this makes perfect business sense) is that Nintendo currently has the best software lineup it's ever had—and it's not even finished yet. There are some fantastic games coming to your N64 in the next nine months, from *Banjo-Tooie* to *The Legend of Zelda: Majora's Mask, Conker's Bad Fur Day* and *Mickey Speedway USA*. And, if we may be so coy, there's also a couple of games you haven't even heard of yet that'll definitely blow your hair back (just wait till E3!).

Minoru Arakawa, President of NOA, fires a shot right across Sony's bow by emphasizing that the Dolphin will have only one porpoise—er, purpose: games. Considering the sticky situation Sony's now in in Japan, with its faltering hardware, this statement couldn't have been better timed. Even Microsoft's Bill Gates, in a conversation with CNN yesterday, said right up front that his machine is all about games.

It's important to note, though, that the press release said nothing about a Japanese release of the Dolphin. It's entirely feasible that NCL could plop the Dolphin into the marketplace very late in the year, but with minimal available software, Nintendo could be looking at a repeat of the Japanese N64 debacle. Of course, the Dolphin will finally shun those clumsy cartridges, and should make quite an impression on Japanese gamers that see carts as "yesterday's technology."

The release said nothing about the Game Boy Advance, either, other than hinting at a possible (and probable) delay to that system, too. Meanwhile, the Game Boy Color's still selling like gangbusters, so diluting the market with the GB Advance would make zero sense from a fiscal standpoint.

Ogre Battle 64 Sees a New Delay

Nintendo owners just can't cut a break... Now, after the disappointing delay of the Dolphin, RPG fans must wait an additional few months to get their mitts on *Ogre Battle 64*. The new date has vaguely been set for sometime in August—but we're not even going to hold our breath for that.

Spider-Man Swings Onto Nintendo 64

Come late summer, Nintendo 64 owners will be singing a different song: Spider-Man, Spider-Man, does whatever a PlayStation can... Yes, PlayStation fans just got the bragging rights to the once-exclusive *Spider-Man*, which will be released by Activision later this year. The publisher also announced that an N64 port's on the way...

A *port?!?* Hold on—don't get your webslinging Underoos in a bind just yet, sailor... Stan Lee's coolest character will be handled by Edge of Reality, the development team responsible for the super-cool *Tony Hawk Pro Skater* port that's already shredding the sales charts!



Tales Of The Hardcore

It's been one CRAZY month, hardcore fans (or freaks as the outside world would call us), and I'm still pained by my ridiculous purchase of a PS2... let's just say there were three zeros in the price tag. Depressed, I paced my oom/hardcore shrine which easily resembles the Howard Hughes resience in his darkest most obsessive days (germs, they're all around!). To ne side a dust free Sony Vega, and on the other a framed *House of he Dead 2* poster (no creases, bends or tears of course). Would I ver rise above this dark hour? Was I doomed for a life, stricken own by the plight of hardcore madness? Well, thank heavens for is column, 'cause just when you think you're sick, out comes a tale ven more twisted than your own. His name is the Tekken Chump nd he obviously dons that black hood because of his immense name. $200 for a *Tekken* standup and $300 on a complete set of SD *ekken* figures?!! Let your peers scoff away, TC, Fury understands... ose voices, they keep calling and calling and calling...

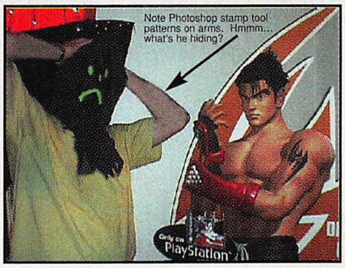


$500⁰⁰

HARDCORE METER
SUBJECT: The *Tekken* Chump
USELESS ITEM: *Tekken* Merchandise
NUMBER OF USES: God only knows. What people do with toys in the privacy of their bedroom is their business.

No soul need hide their face in the lair of hardcore. Your purchases may seem crazy, even subject for immediate hospitalization, but in the land of hardcore all are welcome!





SETTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT

"The absence of limbs is a concession to he 32-bit days when developers had to keep amerates up by keeping the number of olygons down, but in the age of 128-bit monsters like the DC, developers can put in lmost as much as the [sic] want."
—*Daily Radar's* Rayman 2 *(DC) review*

This tiny excerpt from a 'competitor's' eb site is living proof that just about nybody can get a job writing for a web te... but because it's in print doesn't mean it's true.

Take this brilliant insight if you will... So ou're telling me that the reason Rayman has o limbs is because when the developers ere programming the game, all those elbow nd knee polys were too much for the Jaguar o handle? It must be true, why even the DC (or was it just Genki?) had problems with elbows and knees in *VF3tb*. But can you imagine the chaotic conversations at Ubi's HQ?

Programmer: Argh!!! No matter what I try, every time I add an elbow, the game chugs like a bitch.
Producer: Damn it, mon ami, we NEED more power!
Programmer: I'm givin' ya all she's got, Capitan... but, sacre bleu, this system's not really 64-bit!
Producer: Merde! ...then just CUT OFF zee limbs!
Programmer: WHAT!?! How is he supposed to jump without legs?
Producer: Nevermind that. We'll call it an "innovation," and GameFan will still herald it as the greatest thing ever. Muhahahaha!!!
Programmer: Stupid Americans!!! I am going to buy more stock in Atari!

Yet, for some reason, we don't think that's quite the way it happened... Why? Because *Rayman* was an entirely sprite-based game—not a polygon in sight! Eggo still hasn't come out of that coma...

Dylan Manger

Chief Creative Officer/Owner **Interactive Republic Corporation**

Date of Birth: 7/29/70

I work for: Interactive Republic Corporation. IRC was founded in September '99 by two brothers, Fritz Manger (CEO) and Dylan Manger (CCO), and their close friends Aron Drayer (President) and Erik Drageset (Art Director). See www.irgames.com.

My previous games include:
Radical Entertainment – Lead Designer: *ESPN Digital Games NFL Football 2000* (PSX & PC); Assistant Designer: *FOX NBA Basketball* (PSX & PC).

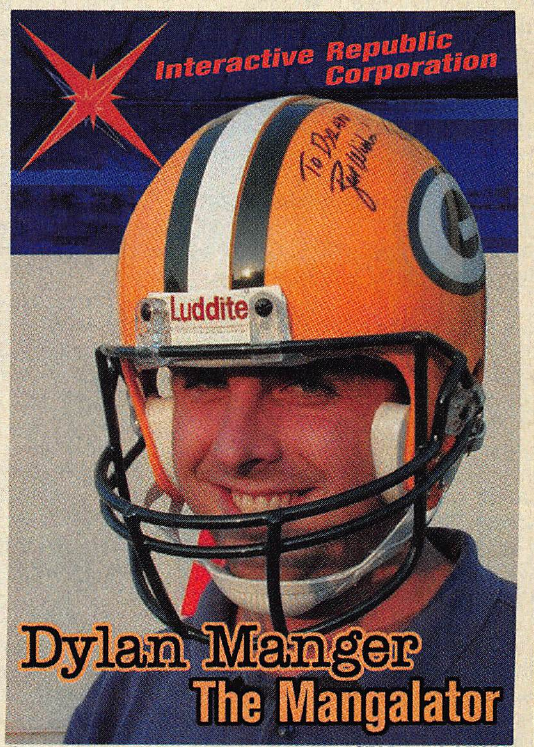
Virgin Interactive – Assistant Lead Tester: *NHL PowerPlay '98* (PC, PSX & Saturn); Tester: *PowerPlay '96, Grand Slam Baseball* (PSX & PC), *Command & Conquer: Red Alert* (PC), *Spot Goes To Hollywood* (PSX).

Sega of America – Assistant Lead Tester: *NHL All-Star Hockey* (Saturn), *Pebble Beach Golf* (Saturn); Tester: *Eternal Champions* (SEGA CD), *Daytona USA* (Saturn), *World Series Baseball* (Genesis & Saturn), *Bug* (Saturn).
My current project is: an extreme sports title.

Hobbies: surfing, golf, Etch-A-Sketch-ing, harassing EB employees, sungazing, ReOps, playing on 'Easy' mode.

Favorite games of all time: *Yar's Revenge* (Atari 2600), *California Games* (Genesis), *Mike Tyson's Punch Out* (NES), *International Track & Field* (arcade), *NHL '94, Return Fire* (3DO), *PGA European Tour, Destruction Derby, Tony Hawk Pro Skater, NFL2K.*

Current favorite games: *SWAT 3, Delta Force 2, DoA2, Syphon Filter 2, NBA2K.*



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About me: I grew up in Seattle, WA, picking on a runty guy in the neighborhood named Billy Gates. Until the age of fifteen, I didn't know there was such a thing as sunlight. After spending several years growing moss on my back, I headed south to SoCal for an education and a tan; I attended Occidental College, learned to drink a lot of beer, and managed to finagle a B.A. in History of the Modern Middle East and Modern Europe. Naturally, my degree in history led me right into the video game industry, where I went to work in the salt mines of Sega as a swing shift tester. Eventually, my tour of duty led me farther south, to Irvine, to test games at Virgin Interactive... A year after that, I became a designer at Radical Entertainment, which was my first real taste of life on the internal side of the industry. I loved it, and realized that it was where you could truly control and influence what a game is and where it's going—for the most part. An overwhelming desire to turn our game ideas into real products, the chance to work for ourselves, and a lack of creative and exciting new games on the market then inspired us to create Interactive Republic. At IRC, we're currently developing an extreme sports title, and are having a ton of fun doing it. Creating a start-up company can be challenging at times, and is a lot of hard work, but the rewards and experiences are oh so sweet. The future at IRC is so bright, I have to squint; we are growing rapidly, and have managed to collect a great assortment of talented people that, as we all know, turn good ideas into great games. I feel like I've finally found the thing I really like doing and, really, isn't that what it's all about? —DM



THE POSTMEISTER

Write to me, I'm running for president!!!
The Postmeister
6301 DeSoto Avenue Suite E
Woodland Hills, CA 91367

The Secrets Of Nintendo's Success

Greetings, O Great Sprite-Lord!

If I may, I'd like to offer a few comments as to what Nintendo should do with its upcoming Dolphin and Game Boy Advance. I promise you, all comments will be printable. Now then...

If the "Big N" has sense enough to pour sand out of a Kokiri boot, they will:

1. Make sure the Dolphin is downwardly compatible with all N64 software.
2. Make sure the Dolphin launches on schedule, with at least one or two games ready to roll at launch.
3. Have a *Mario*, *Metroid* or *Zelda* game ready to roll out as soon as quality allows.
4. Tend to the classic games and/or characters first. This is what's called "paying the dues," and every new system must do this. The Saturn did not, and look what happened! Time enough for the artsy experimental stuff a bit later, folks!

Now, regarding the Game Boy Advance, the "Big N" should:

1. Again, make certain the GBA launches on schedule.
2. Have a *Mario*, *Metroid*, or *Zelda* game ready to roll ASAP.
3. If, as reported, the GBA's graphics surpass those of the Saturn, this would be a great opportunity to create or adapt some hand-held versions of classic N64 games.
4. Pay very close attention to the editors of GameFan, especially those of the Postal persuasion!

Until Link shares a bachelor pad with Strider Hiryu...
Don Lewis
Fortuna, CA

Sounds like a "certain somebody" is bucking for a job at the house that Mario built, doesn't it? Young Mr. Lewis has laid out a pretty solid battle plan for Nintendo to pursue. It's always a good idea to follow up success with success, and games like Mario, Metroid *and* Zelda *are like a license to print money. But Nintendo's so far from needing to pay dues, I doubt any counterfeiting will need to take place... Nintendo fell flat with the Virtual Boy, and I don't think they're fixing to make a novelty system their blueprint for future success (the humblest of apologies to ECM, who cannot explain his love of the Nintendo red and black attack).*

As for backward compatibility, you know Sony's banking on that as a way for Johnny and Janie Q. Public to entice their parents into buying a new game console, so the hundreds and thousands of their parents' hard-earned cheddar don't go to waste when it's, "Out with the old, in with the bold." Unfortunately, Nintendo ain't going the cartridge route this time around... it's all about the discs these days, and Nintendo has finally found themselves won over by the huge storage space of those little silver platters. If they're smart (and you know they are), they'll make the Game Boy Advance backward-compatible with the insane library of GameBoy titles now available. That little handheld has been around as long as most of my Post-Fu students have been playing games, and it'd be foolish to ditch the library that helped keep them alive when they deliver their glorious new handheld.

Unless you get a call from Howard Lincoln, though, it looks like you're gonna have to do just like the rest of us... sit back, and watch the fireworks. One thing's for sure, though: If it's coming from Nintendo, it's bound to be fun!

The Best Games, And Mag, Of All Time?

Although I do feel that you guys are a bit harsh on the reviews (especially Nintendo, but that's just because I'm a Nintendo fanboy, but like to play all games across all consoles), I have to thank you for being the most brutal, honest and informative magazine out there. I've read all of the other magazines out there, and trust me guys, you're in a class all of your own. Your reviews of *FF8*, *Mario Party 2*, *Pokemon Stadium* and *Worms: Armageddon*, along with countless others, have been spot-on, and I would like to commend your staff for the good work.

BTW, I know this is somewhat of a strange topic, and I think you guys have commented on it before in a past letters section or something like that, but when are you going to do a "Greatest Games Of All Time" list? I would LOVE for you guys to do it, even with all of your different tastes in games: ECM with his shooters, Dango with his *VOOT*, Eggo with his RPGs, the Judge with his strategy games, Fury being a Treasure freak (sorry, Fury, my Treasure games are staying put!). I would like the games with the seal of approval from a REAL enthusiast magazine. Well, if you turn me down, I don't blame you, but please consider it at least. Anyway, keep up the good work, and please, don't ever change (much).

Lord Shockwave
Via The Internet

We're here to serve, Sir Shockmeister (whatever happened to Megatron, anyway?)... You can always count on GameFan to be immune to selling out, completely focused on giving you the straight dope on every single game that matters. It's what we do... What can I say—we just don't know any better!

Unfortunately, our editorial staff is a



This little black & white tidbit is the handiwork of one of the GameFan staff. Guess which one and you can be the proud winner of the opportunity to buy it for $50!

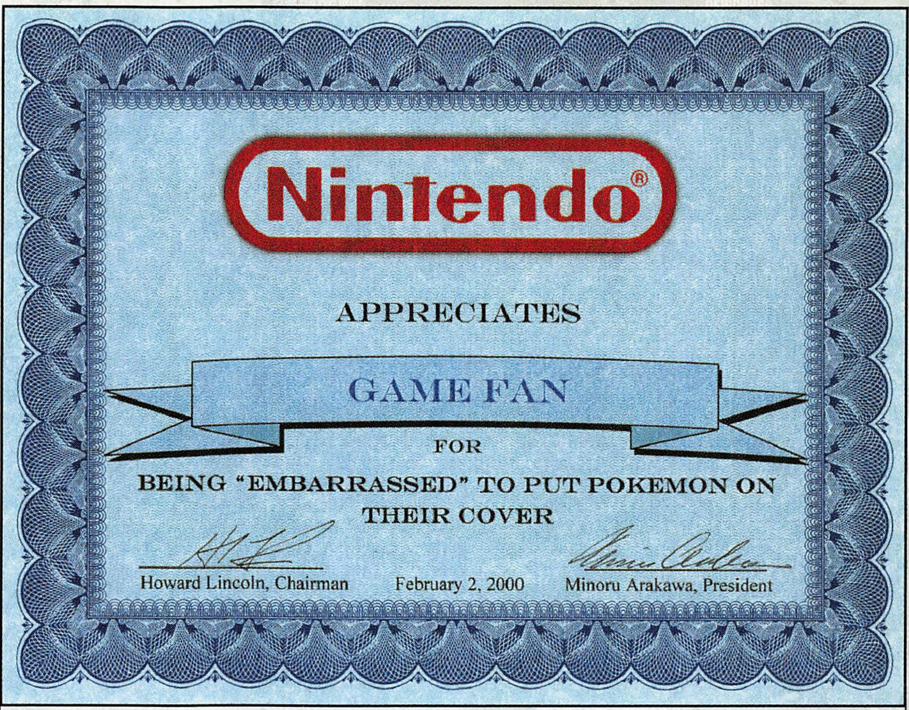
surly bunch, and not a single one of them will concede defeat in a discussion about their favorite games. No one will ever tell ECM that shooters are not one of the preeminent genres in gaming, and nobody will ever be able to convince Fury that Mischief Makers *qualifies as a bad Treasure game. In fact, most of us still can't believe Eggo actually liked* Final Fantasy VIII. *For this reason, compiling the GameFan staff's picks for history's greatest video games is an undertaking that should never be allowed to happen, because the conflict that would ensue might breach the fabric of space-time, endangering the lives of everyone on the planet. Obviously, this is something I cannot allow to happen, as guardian of all that is good in the world of gaming. It's hard enough to get most of these guys to compile their own Top 10 lists without trying to influence one another's selections!*

Where Are The Quality Macross Games?

What the heck has happened to *Macross VF-X2*?! This game looked so totally amazing and now I can't find it on your website or anywhere else for that matter. Could you please enlighten me to the current status of this seemingly awesome game and if North American gamers will finally get the *Macross* game they deserve.

Thunderbolt
Via The Internet

If you want American players to receive the Macross *game they deserve,* Digital Missions VF-X2 *isn't it. Better than the first installment (and that wouldn't have been a feat too difficult for a team of trained chimpanzees), but still not what* Macross *fans have been clamoring for since the day they heard the sweet, haunting strains of Sharon Apple emanating from their entertainment centers. You probably haven't seen much on this game because it came and went like a 24-hour flu... We saw it, wept a little, and then went on with our daily lives.* Crystal Dreams, VF-X2... *is there no justice in this cruel universe?! Suffice it to say, you probably won't be seeing this completely mediocre effort Stateside.*



If there's one thing we at GameFan take great pride in, it's not selling out to the man... While every other game mag on the planet had Pokémon on their cover in the past year, we resisted the urge to 'go along with the crowd.' Apparently Nintendo was also impressed by our tremendous display of willpower (much to the chagrin of our esteemed publisher, Kid Fan).

Modding Your DC Is A Payne

Dear Posty,

I have two big questions: One, I don't know if you've heard but there is a really cool action/adventure game called Max Payne about to be released pretty soon for the Windows PC (which I have). I have heard recently that the same game might also be released for the Dreamcast (which I also have). Max Payne might just be the video game John Woo fans have been waiting for (myself included!). My question is, when exactly will this game be released for Dreamcast?!

Also, I assume you've heard about the new mod chip that enables you to play import games on the US Dreamcast. The thing is, I don't want to send my $189 system to some chop shop to get it installed (shipping packages is such a worrisome chore!) and I know I can't install it myself. I was thinking about just buying an import DC and an external converter to play US games. My question is, should I shell out the $190 for the system and converter, or just wait for the US external converter to be released (if the thing is ever made, that is). Thanks!

Darian Murphy
Chicago, IL

Because of the great many Postal warriors worldwide who all turn to yours truly for guidance and support in this topsy-turvy world of gaming, I have my feet in a great many international waters. To Europe, we go, where the gang of code junkies at Remedy Entertainment... who've been planning a Dreamcast version of this game since the day they heard about Sega's little monster. However, the development on this Woo-inspired game has been lengthy and arduous, and the team continues to insist that Max will be set upon the streets, "When he's good and ready." Will the Dreamcast version follow post-haste? That remains to be seen; Remedy won't talk about it anymore. Leave 'em alone, they've got work to do.

The mod chip is a beautiful thing, but it takes skilled hands to perform the mod yourself. There are a variety of online importers who are ready, willing and able to make a little magic with your import or domestic DC, and the cost isn't outrageous. Our advice is to find a reputable dealer and take the plunge (or you could just buy an import DC—ECM likes wasting his money this way...never let it be said that playing games doesn't pay). External, plug-in convertors have been promised since the day the Dreamcast was launched in Japan, but never materialized... so it looks like you've got no choice but to have a technician apply a little silicon and solder to your DC. They make miracles happen!

Is Dolphin A Fish Out Of Water?

A few weeks ago, I was reading an article on the PS2's release in Japan. The specs on that monster of a machine are gonna kill the Dreamcast's (or so it seems). I'd like to know two things: 1) if the upcoming Nintendo Dolphin is going to be able to compete with Sony's new monster, and 2) when the PS2 comes to the States, will it be the same as the Japanese version or will it be a lesser being? Thanks.

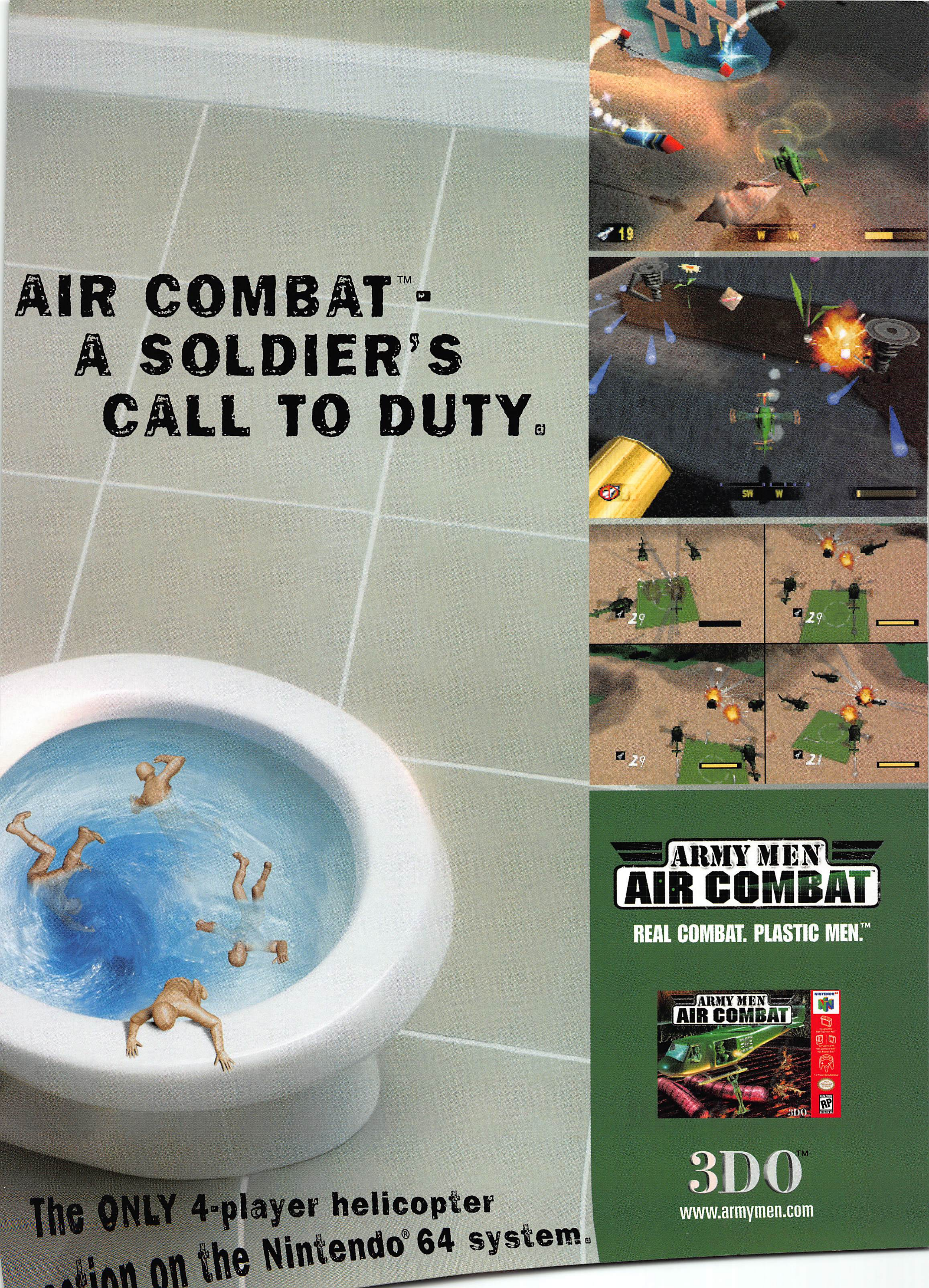
Gerald Aragon
Via The Internet

Oh, I think Nintendo's gonna be all right... they always are. As Mr. Lewis pointed out earlier this month, they've got two potential wild animals they're releasing into the wild: the Dolphin and the Game Boy Advance. Even if one of these succeeds, they'll be making money. If both succeed? Look out...

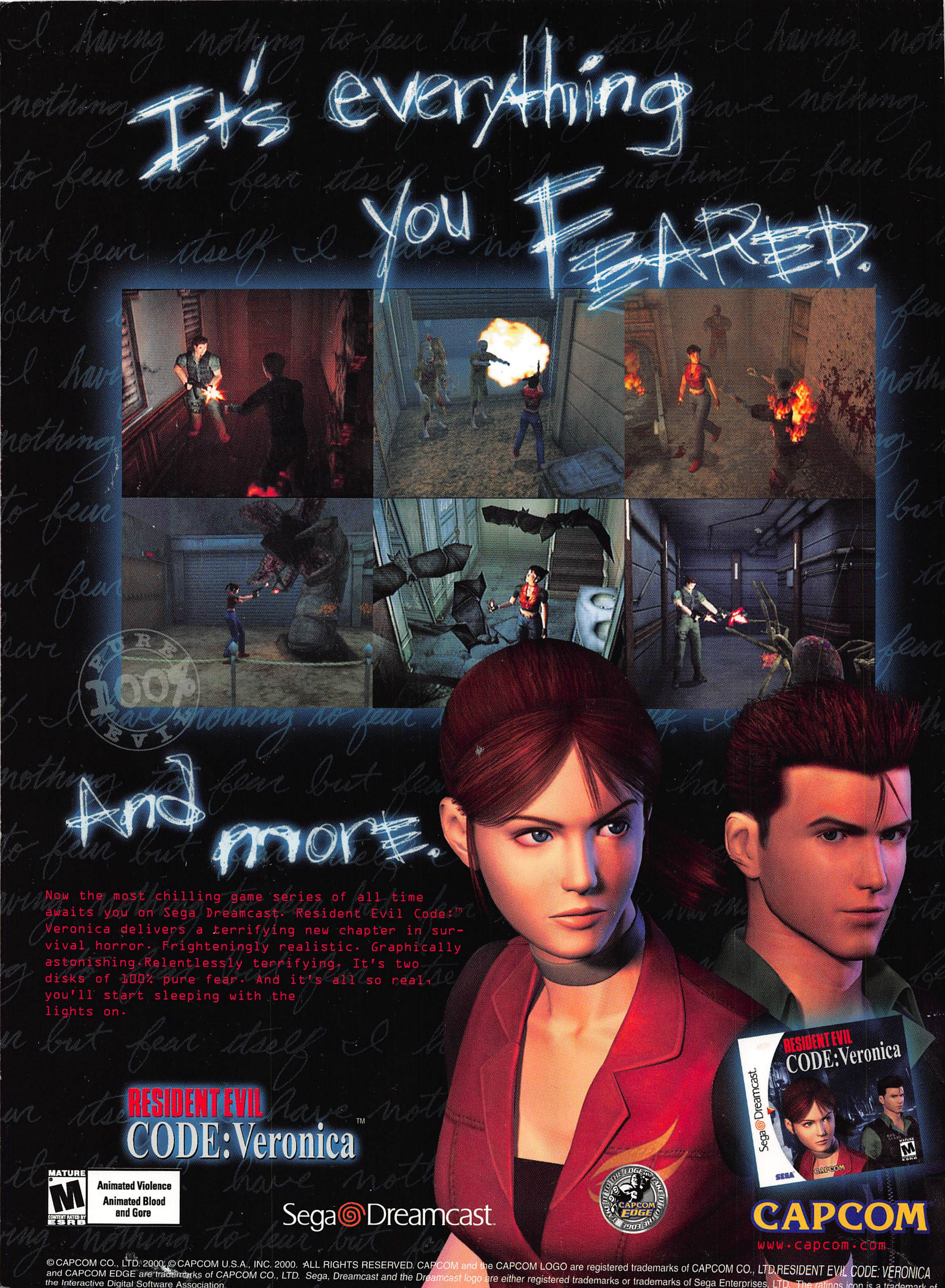
When Sony's new baby hits the States, we can hopefully look forward to great games, and a complete absence of all the nagging little problems the Japanese version has suffered from so far. Japan is almost like a beta-testing ground for new consoles; America gets to sit back and watch as Japan helps these companies iron out all the wrinkles... So don't sweat the technique, Sony and Nintendo have both got it covered.



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